SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 407. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 17TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

Worth a Guinea a Box

has passed into a proverb
expressive of universal approval
concerning a medicine of rare value.

This Notable Verdict,

justified by a sale of 6,000,000 boxes yearly,
must secure the confidence of sufferers
in all climes and countries,
and
ever-widening fame
of

BEECHAM'S PILLS

of
ever-widening fame
and
in all climes and countries
must secure the confidence of sufferers,
justified by a sale of 6,000,000 boxes yearly.

This Notable Verdict

concerning a medicine of rare value,
expressive of universal approval,
has passed into a proverb—

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VARIETY COMPANY, DALSTON, LONDON.

SHORT STORIES

No. 407.] For the Week ending Oct. 17th, 1896. [1d.

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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RELEASED!

In the cosy isolation of a first-class carriage, speeding its way westward from London, sat a lady and gentleman whose travelling-bags, dressing-cases, rugs, and other paraphernalia of modern travellers were all so new as to suggest the thought that they were bride and bridegroom. This was indeed the case, their marriage having taken place at noon of that same day.

It had been a very quiet, modest wedding, with no music, no bells, and no bridesmaids. The spectators had consisted of an aunt of the bride—who had given her away with an air of great relief—her maid, the pew-opener, and Mr. Trevor's valet.

The minister, who had a bad cold, and felt chilled and out of humour, had hurried through the ceremony without any show of interest or pleasure, and then, after signing their names in the register, the "happy pair" had driven off. An hour had been spent at the hotel, where the bride exchanged her wedding-dress for one suitable for a journey, but there had been no wedding breakfast, no gathering of merry friends to offer best wishes and congratulations.

Arriving at Waterloo in time to catch the down express, the bridegroom had secured a private carriage, had seen that his companion was comfortable, had provided her with a magazine and an illustrated paper, and had then settled himself in the corner opposite her, and fallen at once into deep, impenetrable thought.

The bride, though a little wounded by his indifference, made no attempt to break the silence. Occasionally she looked at him with wistful curiosity, wondering what were the thoughts which so completely absorbed him. Were they of her? It scarcely seemed possible.

Handsome as his face was, it had the worn and haggard look of one who had passed through much mental suffering, and the dark lustre of his eyes was shaded by an ineffable sadness. How had he suffered? What unhappy secrets did his past hold?

As she asked herself these questions the bride's heart sank. She was forced to acknowledge to herself that, dearly as she loved him, she knew little of him. She had met him—just six weeks before—at a small watering-place where she was staying with her aunt. From the first day of their acquaintance, which was due to an accident, he had paid her marked attention; and she, grateful to him because he had drawn her away from her dreary past, and stirred into colour the pale and even tenor of her life, had turned towards him as a sunflower towards her god, and wondered at the great good fortune which had come to her.

Her aunt, and only near relative, had been delighted to rid herself of the responsibility and expense of a penniless charge, and had willingly agreed to Mr. Trevor's wish for an immediate marriage, assuring the girl that she had received the most satisfactory replies to the inquiries she had made in regard to Mr. Trevor's standing and character.

Laura, with the enthusiasm of a young and inexperienced girl, believed a new and perfect life stretched gloriously before her, and even her husband's strange silence did not altogether quench her delight in the thought that henceforth she was to have a home. They were on their way now to it, and there need be no more weary wandering from one little town to another, no annoying struggles with poverty, no dread of the unknown future.

The journey lasted all night, and Laura slept through most of it; but whenever she opened her eyes for a moment it was to see her husband still staring from the window with that fixed, impenetrable gaze.

It was six o'clock in the morning when the train reached the little station of Dunstan. George Trevor helped his bride out, found a comfortable seat for her in the little waiting-room, and then went to secure a carriage and cart to take them and their servants and luggage to Wincot House.

"I won't be gone a moment longer than I can help, Laura," he said, as he walked away.

As he spoke, an old woman, who had come in just before them, and taken a seat in a corner, started up with an exclamation of surprise, and threw back the thick veil of her old-fashioned bonnet. Taking a few steps forward, she seemed about to address Mr. Trevor, but as he walked away without apparently perceiving her, she sank back into her seat again with a deep sigh.

Laura, generous and impulsive, rose and approached her.

"Did you wish to speak to Mr. Trevor?" she asked. "He will be back in a few moments."

The old woman, who looked as though she had known better times, shook her head.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "He mightn't care to speak to me." Then she looked searchingly into Laura's face. "Are you any relation of his?" she asked.

"I am his wife," answered Laura, blushing rosily.

"What! He has *married!*" cried the old woman in a shocked and horrified voice. "It—it can't be," and her hand, in its cheap, cotton glove, closed like a vice on the bride's arm.

Laura drew back, a little offended, wondering if this oddly-acting old woman could be in her right mind. It was a relief to her to see her husband enter. She turned to meet him and was about to speak when she saw his eyes travel to the old woman behind her. His face was overspread instantly by a ghastly pallor, his eyes dilated with a strange mixture of pain and vacancy in their look, his arms fell to his sides, and a shiver ran through him from head to foot.

"I see you haven't forgot me, Doctor George," said the old woman, curtsying respectfully. "I hope you're

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well, sir. I've got a place to nurse a sick lady near here, Mrs. Maxwell of Cedar Lodge, and I'm waiting for the fly now. You're married, I hear, sir."

"Yes, I am married," rejoined Mr. Trevor mechanically. Then, with an evident effort, he turned to his wife. "Come, Laura," he said, and led the way to the carriage that waited for them.

Laura hardly waited to be seated before asking the question that fairly burnt on her tongue.

"Who was that strange old woman, George? You seemed so surprised to see her."

"She is a Mrs. Henland, and she nursed me once during a long illness," he answered. Then after a pause, he added: "I would rather not talk of her, my dear; she is connected with a very painful incident in my life."

"But why did she call you doctor?"

"I practised medicine once—many years ago," he replied in a stifled voice; and then he bade her look out and admire the little village through which they were passing.

But Laura could not feign an interest she did not feel. She obediently gave one glance from the carriage window, then clasped both hands round her husband's arm and nestled close to his shoulder.

"How little I really know about you, George, after all," she whispered. "You are almost a stranger to me. Some day you must tell me all about your past life, dear."

His only answer was a deep sigh.

Wincot House was about two miles from the village, and was surrounded by an old-fashioned brick wall, with a solid, projecting coping thickly covered with ivy. The wall inclosed grounds so thickly wooded that no glimpse of a house could be obtained from the road. But after passing a lodge, which was shut up and in a ruinous condition, the carriage entered a pretty winding drive under the trees to a large, rambling, old-fashioned house of red brick, with a red-tiled roof, gable windows, and a thick growth of ivy and wisteria over the rear portion of it.

"Oh, what a charming place!" cried Laura, as her husband assisted her to alight. "I know I will be perfectly happy here, George."

"Heaven grant it!" he said, in a hoarse, low voice, and led the way into the house.

As soon as her toilet had been made and breakfast disposed of, Laura made an inspection of her new home under the guidance of her husband. She was delighted with everything.

"All it needs to make it perfect is an air of being occupied," she said.

"No one except the caretaker has lived here since my mother died, eight years ago," said Trevor. "I came down once for a day or two, but found it too lonely."

"It shan't be lonely now. Everything will be entirely different," whispered Laura tenderly.

He looked down at her with a wan smile.

"Heaven grant it!" he said again.

The tour of the house finished, they went back to the morning room. Laura noticed as they entered that her husband glanced at the clock on the mantel. The hands pointed to twenty minutes of eleven.

"How time has flown!" she said. "I think I will leave you now to look over your papers, George, while I go upstairs and see to the unpacking of my boxes."

To her surprise, he seized her by the hand, an expression of fear and anxiety overspreading his face.

"No, no," he said in a voice which vibrated with a strange alarm; "remain with me half-an-hour longer, Laura. I will not ask you to stay—after that." His voice sank to a husky whisper over the last words, and she felt his hands tremble.

The bride made no attempt to break the silence.

A little puzzled by his manner, yet pleased by his reluctance to let her leave him, she laughingly seated herself beside him on the lounge, and began to talk animatedly about the little changes she intended to make in the arrangements of the rooms; but she could not but observe that her husband paid little attention to her; that he seemed nervous and excited, and that his eyes wandered again and again to the clock.

"My time is so nearly up," she said at length, as the clock chimed the hour of eleven, "that I think I must ask you——"

She stopped, startled and alarmed at the extraordinary change which had suddenly come over him. His eyes had fixed themselves intensely, almost fiercely, on the perfectly vacant wall to the right of the mantel; a livid paleness had overspread his face, his features altered, he sat still before her looking like a man in a death trance.

"George," she cried, "what is the matter? Let me ring; let me get you something."

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She started up to rush from the room, but his voice, faint and hollow, detained her.

"Don't call anyone," he said slowly, speaking not to her, but in the direction in which his eyes were still fixed. "You can't help me; I—I hoped——"

He stopped; his face whitened horribly, and the perspiration broke out all over it. He tried to continue, said a word or two, then stopped again. Seriously alarmed, Laura again made a motion to leave the room, and again his voice detained her.

"It is I who must go," he said, staggering to his feet.

She started up to rush from the room.

"Laura forgive me! Heaven knows how I believed——" He stopped, threw up his hands with a gesture of pain, flung open the door, and rushed out like a madman.

The horrible suspicion that he might indeed be insane made Laura tremble from head to foot. Too weak to stand, she sank upon the lounge and buried her face in the cushions.

She had lain there for perhaps half-an-hour when she heard the sound of wheels on the road outside. Springing up, she rushed to the window in time to see a dogcart dash furiously from the door. The occupant was her husband.

Stupefied with surprise, she did not hear the door open, and started as the voice of her new maid broke the silence.

"Mr. Trevor bade me give you this note, madam," said the girl.

A note! That would explain all! Laura caught it from the tray with trembling fingers, and tore it open the moment she was again alone.

"My darling Laura," she read, "in marrying you I did you a great wrong. It was not intentional, for I had a wild hope that I might make you happy and that my own life might be blessed. I see now that this cannot be. The greatest kindness I can show you, I show you by leaving you for ever. You will believe this when you learn the history of my past life. The woman we met at the station this morning can tell you all you need to know. Farewell."

In half-an-hour Laura, on foot, was on her way to Cedar Lodge.

Following the directions given her by a labourer she met on the road she found it without difficulty, and was readily admitted into the presence of the woman she wished to see, who happened to be at luncheon.

Laura broke down when she told her errand, and perhaps it was the best thing she could have done, for it enlisted Mrs. Henland's sympathies at once, and removed all objections she might otherwise have made to telling the story the strangely deserted bride was so anxious to hear.

"When I first met your husband, nine years ago," began the nurse, "I was taking care of his cousin, young Philip Trevor, who had been thrown from a horse and injured about the head. He was soon out of danger, but it was discovered that his memory was strangely affected. He could not recollect any incident half-an-hour after its occurrence. There was a consultation of doctors, of course, and they decided that a piece of skull was pressing on the brain, and that the boy's case was hopeless unless this pressure could be removed. In fact, there was every reason to suppose that his mind would give way entirely. But the operation necessary would be attended with such danger that not one of the doctors cared to undertake it.

"After an interview with old Squire Trevor, who fairly idolised his son and heir, all three positively declined to have anything to do with it." The nurse paused a moment, and looked at Laura as if expecting her to speak. But as the girl remained silent, the old woman sighed and resumed her story.

"Doctor George Trevor had been practising about two years at that time, and, of course, took great interest in his cousin's case. He didn't agree with the three doctors. He insisted that though the operation would be a very delicate one it could be performed with entire safety. Every day he and his aunt—who was beside herself over her boy's condition—talked the matter over. She urged her husband to let their nephew perform the operation; but the old squire steadily declined. He had confidence in the doctors, and would run no risks.

"One day, however, he left home early in the morning to attend to some business in the country that would keep him all day. But he happened to meet at the station the very man he desired to see, and so gave up his trip and returned home. It was ten minutes after eleven when he reached his house in Berkeley Square. The man who opened the door for him blurted out at once the most terrible news. Philip was dead—had died ten minutes before under an operating knife. The man who had held the knife was his cousin, Doctor George, now heir to everything his uncle possessed.

"The first person the Squire saw after he heard the awful news was his wife. She told him that his nephew had taken advantage of my absence and his to perform the operation; that he had done so secretly, and without consulting or informing anyone; that his zeal in his profession and desire to win renown had led him——"

The nurse stopped. Laura has risen, and was regarding her with indignant eyes.

"I don't believe it," the girl said vehemently. "She said what was false. She was either a weak or a very wicked woman."

"My dear," said the nurse, "if it was a falsehood it was never contradicted. But, of course, the old Squire believed his wife. He rushed straight to the room where his dead son lay, and there branded his nephew as a murderer. He raged and stormed like a madman, accused Doctor George of scheming to enrich himself through the death of his cousin, and swore a terrible

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oath that he would suffer for what he had done. He had hardly uttered it when he fell to the floor like a stone. He had been seized with apoplexy, and the words of that oath were the last that ever left his lips. Before night he was a corpse."

A long, shuddering sigh escaped Laura's lips. "And —and George?" her pale lips whispered.

"Ah, my dear, the worst isn't told yet. Poor Doctor George in less than a week was down with brain fever. I nursed him, and he got well again—as well as he ever will be in this world, I suppose. There's no man so poor, so wretched, that he would want to exchange places with Doctor George. Do you understand? Can you put what I have told you with what happened this morning at eleven o'clock and know what it is that is killing him?"

"You mean——"

"I mean that every morning at eleven o'clock he sees the spirit of his uncle, or *thinks* he sees it. He gave up practising medicine, he has never touched the Trevor estate, but nothing appeases the spirit. Regularly every day, at the hour of the poor boy's death nine years ago, that phantom has appeared to the man you have married. There are people who say your husband's

On her way to Cedar Lodge.

mind is affected. Perhaps, it is. He has tried travel, change of every sort, but it hasn't rid him of the phantom. The grief and pain of it all broke his mother's heart. She died eight years ago."

"And Philip's mother? What of her?"

"She's living twelve miles from here at Trevor House. I was told to-day that she's in the last stage of consumption."

"Thank God, she still lives. I shall lose no time in seeing her. I must hear what *she* has to say about my husband."

"She can't keep the spirit from appearing to Doctor George, my dear."

"Perhaps not; but she can do my husband justice before she dies. If what she told the old Squire that awful day was untrue, let her say so now before her lips are stiff in death."

"I fear you won't gain anything from her, my dear. She was a hard one always."

"Time may have softened her. But whether to lose or gain, by ten o'clock to-morrow morning I shall be at Trevor House."

And she was. But at the door an unexpected obstacle met her. The girl who answered her ring told her that no visitors were ever admitted, and that the house was kept as quiet as possible, for Mrs. Trevor was not expected to live the week out.

"All the more reason why I should see her at once," said Laura. "It is a matter of life and death."

The girl shook her head. "I'm sorry, but I can't admit you, miss. I would lose my place if I did."

Tears of desperation stood in Laura's eyes. She tried a last resort. She caught the girl's hand and pressed a sovereign into it.

"You need only tell me in which room I can find her —then go downstairs," she whispered. "And should you lose this place you can find another as good at Wincot House."

The girl hesitated, then said in a low voice: "She has the first room to the left at the head of the stairs," and walked quickly away without glancing behind her.

The next moment Laura was hurrying up the staircase, and with a wildly-beating heart she knocked at the door of the first room to the left.

"Come in," said a low, weary voice from within.

"Pray heaven she is alone," thought Laura, and opened the door.

The room was darkened by heavy brown shades at the windows; but the leaping firelight showed Laura a couch drawn up at the foot of the bed. Upon it lay a woman of, perhaps, forty-five years of age. The look of unutterable sadness about her mouth, the weary hopelessness marked on every feature, moved Laura strangely. A second glance showed more than weariness on her face—Death itself was there. The heavy grey hair rippled back in damp masses over her forehead of marble pallor; the large blue eyes glittered with feverish brilliancy, and on either cheek the scarlet flush glowed like a flame. She raised herself on one elbow as Laura drew near.

"Who are you?" she asked in a faint voice.

"I am George Trevor's wife," answered Laura, "and I have come to ask you to do him justice before you die."

A startling change came over the worn, white face. Laura shrank from the fixed stare of agony in the great glittering eyes.

"To do him justice! After all these years!" The words were almost a cry.

Hardly conscious in her excitement what she was doing, and fearing every instant that she would be interrupted by the entrance of some servant, Laura dropped on her knees by the couch and poured forth her pitiful story.

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"Help him," she pleaded in conclusion. "Oh, if you only knew what he has suffered."

"Suffered!" repeated Mrs. Trevor, in a bitter tone. "His suffering has been nothing compared to mine. My sin has cost me dear."

She closed her eyes and lay back upon her pillows as if exhausted; but presently she moved, sighed faintly, and extended to Laura one frail, white hand.

"Find your husband," she said in a low, broken voice, "and tell him that in a little while the world shall know the truth. In a few hours my spirit will be able to commune with that of the one who haunts him now. Living, I cannot help him; dead, I can give him his release."

Her eyes closed. The hard despair settled again, wan and white, on her face. Without a word Laura bent low, gently kissed the pallid cheek, and then noiselessly left the room.

* * * *

In the little parlour of the solitary inn that Chad's End could boast sat a gentleman and lady, who had evidently just finished breakfast. The lady, who had arrived in the early morning train, and had not yet removed her hat, was speaking.

"And so, George," she said in a clear, flute-like voice, "I hunted up your lawyer in London, found out where you had hidden yourself, and—here I am. And here I intend to stay until I can take you back with me to Wincot House."

As she uttered the last words she folded her hands around his arm, and looked up at him with tender, humid eyes.

Her husband's arm went around her waist at once.

"My brave Laura," he said, as he tenderly kissed her brow, "you little know what you have undertaken. But you shall stay. As you have surmised, it was at my aunt's earnest request, and upon her assurance that my uncle had given his consent to the operation, and had left home in order to be out of the way during the ordeal, that I undertook it. Fury at me for my failure, grief for the loss of her only child, and dread of her husband's anger, led her to deny all knowledge of my intention to perform it. And afterwards, when she might have repented her falsehood and exonerated me from blame, it was too late. My uncle was dead; and he had died with that promise on his lips——"

"My release has come, thank God!"

He stopped and shuddered. She waited in silence until he had controlled himself.

"I never asked her to make a confession," he continued. "What good would it have done to me—I was a haunted man."

A knock at the door, and the landlord entered with a telegram. It was from Trevor's lawyer, and contained startling news: Mrs. Trevor had died that morning at three o'clock.

The telegram fell from George Trevor's hand; he seemed almost overcome with a strange excitement; his breath came in laboured gasps; his straining eyes riveted themselves on the face of the mantel clock, the hands of which pointed to five minutes to eleven.

Breathlessly Laura waited. Her eyes, too, were fastened on the clock. One minute, two, three, four—eleven strokes rang out in silvery music on the silent room.

A moment passed—a moment during which Laura's heart seemed to stop beating. Then her husband turned and looked at her, his heart in his eyes.

"My release has come, thank God!" he cried, and clasped her in his arms.

Percy Rowen.

Post-card Competition.—No. 16.
A guinea is offered to the reader living within 100 miles of London who first forwards the sentence, appearing on pp. 482 to 486, which applies to the sketch on the front page of this number. Another guinea will be given to the reader living more than 100 miles away, under the same conditions. Post-cards only, please.

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LADY SHULDAM'S MEMOIRS.

When Henry Mainwaring arrived in England from South Africa and ascertained that his betrothed, Kate Tomley, had gone to Switzerland with her aunt, Lady Shuldam, for a month, before joining her sister, Lady Nugent, at Staples, he stayed in town just long enough to make arrangements for the investment of the pile he had made at Johannesburg, and then started for the Continent.

Three years before Lady Shuldam had come upon the young people in the conservatory and there had been a scene.

It all came back to Mainwaring now as the train tore on to Folkestone.

"Do you dare tell me, niece, that you have been mad enough to love a poor man? In these days a wife cannot have a husband too rich."

"However poor Harry is," was the simple reply, "I know I shall be happy!"

Her ladyship glared. The romantic fool must have been born on purpose to disgrace her.

"But have you realised what it is to be the wife of a poor man?" she cried. "To wear your dresses till they are threadbare and do all the washing at home. As Mr. Mainwaring tells me that he has no clients at present and that his available means consist of eight hundred pounds, you would, if you married him, have to do without a nursemaid"—there was not much delicacy about Lady Shuldam—"and wheel the shabby, pale-faced babies about in the rickety perambulator yourself till they got old enough to go to a Board School in patched clothes and worn-out boots. In three years," went on her ladyship with great unction, "you would be an old woman, for care is the great destroyer of beauty, not time, and good looks soon disappear with hard work and poor food"—her ladyship had never done a day's work in her life; still she was not considered, strictly speaking, beautiful—"and once they are gone, Mr. Mainwaring, judging by what I know of men, would seek attractions and pleasures anywhere but at home."

But this temperate and considerate speech had no effect on Kate; she simply replied: "I have promised to be his wife, Aunt, and I shall keep my word."

Then Lady Shuldam lost her temper, and, as her ladyship in her tantrums had always been remarkable for the tropical fervour of her language, the strife waxed warm.

At length peace was declared on the following terms: Henry was to go abroad to seek his fortune, to acquire which three years was allowed. During this time he was not to write to the young lady, but he might if he chose communicate with her ladyship at intervals, informing her how he was getting on. If at the end of three years he was not the owner of twenty thousand pounds, or thereabouts, Kate, to use her aunt's words, was at liberty to marry the first rich man who proposed, and as she would then be twenty-one she should advise her to take the first.

So the lovers, after an affecting farewell, parted, and next day Mainwaring started for South Africa with his friend Thorpe, who was as eager to find a short cut to wealth as himself.

Lady Shuldam was the widow of a city knight. As we have indicated, she was a shrewd, hard woman of the world, but she had a weakness, a weakness which, in her old age, developed into a positive craze. In early life her friends were principally to be found among the city magnates residing about Clapham, but when the title came the Shuldams immediately migrated to Kensington.

Her ladyship did not, however, entirely desert her old friends. The Dobsons, for instance, who occupied a large house facing the common, had no cause to complain of her ladyship's treatment. True, she did not much care about the Dobsons at Kensington, but, on the other hand, she was affability itself to the Dobsons at Clapham. On these occasions her conversation mostly bore on the social successes she had achieved with other titled people at the West-end.

According to Lady Shuldam, the *élite* of society, and even Royalty itself, was not averse to spending an hour or two in the Shuldam mansion.

The Dobsons listened to the recital of these triumphs with hearts bursting with mingled malice and disbelief.

Carried away by her theme, Lady Shuldam would sometimes relate the same story twice over, and, if the two versions differed, which was frequently the case, the Dobsons would, in a pleasantly facetious manner, point out the discrepancies and look at one another. Lady Shuldam was, however, equal to the occasion. If her memory was defective, her craft was great.

On the next visit to the Dobsons she produced a diary which was found to contain a vast amount of most amusing and instructive information concerning the sayings and doings of eminent people known to her ladyship.

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The Dobsons learnt on the unimpeachable authority of the diary that:

"The Duchess of Teck had informed Lady Shuldam on Wednesday, the 16th of July, that her mother during her lifetime had always been extremely partial to liver and bacon.

"That the Queen made a point of never discarding her boots till they had been soled and heeled twice.

"That Mr. Gladstone was rather fond of custard puddings, and that Lord Salisbury drank eight quarts of hot water a day to keep down his growing stoutness, and that when Lady Shuldam recommended to his lordship that the hot water should be flavoured with the juice of lemon, to take off the flatness, his lordship had instantly adopted her advice and called specially to thank her for the suggestion."

Now, the compilation of imaginary conversations with eminent people is very much like building castles in the air, the result depends, wholly and solely, on the vividness of the imagination. Lady Shuldam's imagination was a fine one, and as the years rolled on the diaries multiplied apace, and nothing gave her greater pleasure than in looking over these records of her industry and inventiveness.

True, the lapse of time rendered it a little difficult for her to know what was true and what was not, but matters were greatly simplified when her ladyship pronounced them to be *all* true.

One day an idea flashed into her mind. Why should they not be published? Other people who had moved in society had published their memoirs with the most gratifying results. They had dealt principally with people who were dead and gone, and who consequently were not in a position to contradict anything they might not have liked.

Her ladyship's memoirs should be on the same lines, as most certainly they would not be dull. Why should they not create a *furore*?

No great amount of literary ability was required.

An inquisitive world simply wanted to know whether the late Duke of Wellington really did say at Waterloo, "Up Guards and at them," or if it was true that Bismarck drank three quarts of lager beer a day, and that Lord Palmerston was never allowed a latch-key, and Lady Shuldam was quite prepared to gratify these wishes.

The memoirs should be in three volumes and should be entitled, "Lady Shuldam's Memoirs." The work had been commenced some months when she met Henry Mainwaring at the house of her eldest niece, Lady Nugent.

Mainwaring was, as we have said, poor, and poverty tames one mightily. So when her ladyship, who found the labour of filling three volumes trying—being at that time nearly sixty years of age—discovered that the young man understood shorthand, she proposed that he should help her, Mainwaring made a very wry face, but consented.

He didn't like the work. He never dreamt that a knowledge of shorthand could be put to such base uses, but he was deeply in love with Kate and ready to swallow anything—even the memoirs—to secure her aunt's favour.

That, as we have seen, was given conditional on his returning with twenty thousand pounds, or thereabouts.

His friend Thorpe, who had been through the School of Mines in South Kensington, was confident they would find gold in South Africa, and thither they went. Thorpe was right, and as they were the first in the field the money poured in fast. Mainwaring, as arranged, wrote at intervals to Lady Shuldam in most hopeful terms, and although he didn't return in three years—it being nearly four—he offered—if her ladyship liked—to remit to England at once seventeen thousand pounds of the stipulated sum.

As no reply was made to this offer, he concluded that no objection would be made to his staying a little longer, which was necessary, in order that his interests in several mines should not be disposed of at a loss. Lady Shuldam and her niece did not to travel to Switzerland alone. They were accompanied by Viscount Pilkington, who had met Kate at her sister's, and fallen desperately in love.

His lordship knew something about her having been engaged to Henry Mainwaring—Kate had frankly told him that she had given her heart to a gentleman from whom she had not heard for over three years—and his lordship had gone to her aunt for particulars.

Her ladyship assumed her blandest manner: "A foolish, wayward creature, my lord. She was a mere child when she engaged herself to a man, well born I will admit, but of whose character and prospects we knew next to nothing. The man went to South Africa, and, of course, forgot all about her."

But his lordship did not look pleased. Her second lover. It sounded like a warmed-up dinner. Lady Shuldam began to feel alarmed.

She was exceedingly anxious that Kate should make a rich marriage. Her losses on the Stock Exchange had of late been exceedingly heavy, and she had serious thoughts of relinquishing her house.

"Your niece tells me that she was deeply attached to Mr. Mainwaring," said the Viscount moodily.

"I believe she wrote several poems having reference to despair, and became familiar with the idea of suicide, and then like a sensible girl forgot all about him. A brief infatuation which wore itself out like all other infatuations."

But his lordship was not convinced.

"She refused me yesterday," he said.

"Of course," replied Lady Shuldam with great animation. "Why, you foolish man, how little you know our sex. Now, if you'll promise to be good, I'll tell you a secret. A woman always refuses a man when he first proposes, that is if she is sure he will propose again."

"Why?" asked the astonished nobleman.

"Because they think it enhances their value. Now I've told you everything. Speak to the sweet girl again, and I'll be bound you will have nothing to complain of."

But her ladyship had not told him everything. She had said nothing about her objection in the first instance to the engagement with Mainwaring.

Lady Shuldam had a rooted disbelief in South Africa; in fact, she had no idea where the place was. If a man could not make a fortune *in* his own country, which she had always understood to be the richest in the world, she did not believe he could make it *out*.

Even the hopeful strain in which the absent one's letters were written did not convince her. So she thought the best thing to do would be to burn them, and then declare he had not written at all.

She will fret a little at first, her ladyship had mused, but with plenty of society and pleasure she will soon forget him.

Twenty thousand in three years, why, poor dear Shuldam, who always insured his unseaworthy vessels for three times the value of the cargo, couldn't make that, and as for his having already made seventeen

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thousand pounds, rubbish! Directly the Viscount had promised to propose again Lady Shuldam hurried to her niece to plead the Viscount's cause. It was not an easy task.

His lordship was not clever. But then, lords, in her opinion, were not expected to be clever. Neither was he entertaining, except when the conversation turned upon dogs. But if she could not find much to say of the man, she found ample scope in his belongings. She dwelt rapturously on his stables, recently built with all the most modern improvements. His three country seats, his yacht, and his town house. His large circle of acquaintance, composed of the most exclusive people, and his snug income of thirty thousand a year, drawn principally from ground rents, not land. A girl, went on her ladyship, who would refuse a man whose income of thirty thousand a year was derived from ground rents, and not land, would hesitate at no crime, however terrible.

She gave the girl no peace. She intreated, she implored, till poor Kate, thoroughly wearied out, gave in.

Then his lordship proposed, and was accepted. So great was the joy of her ladyship, that she promised the Viscount to devote a whole page to him in her memoirs, which were now approaching completion.

When Mainwaring arrived at the hotel where they were staying, great was his consternation when he found how matters stood.

He instantly sought Lady Shuldam, who solemnly declared she had never received a single letter, and called Kate to witness that she had never once spoken about breaking the engagement till the three years had expired. When he was told that Lord Pilkington had gone to Rome, where his mother was staying, to ascertain if she would like Kate to visit her, he was in despair.

Kate was equally despondent. She had found that her love after all was not dead. She had thought that the flame which once burnt so brightly was now ashes, but she discovered, to her horror, that it was still smouldering.

She frantically tried to pump cold water on it from a moral fire engine, but the embers obstinately refused to be extinguished.

She shut herself up in the sitting-room at the hotel, but Harry was always coming in on some pretext or other to see her aunt. She tried to keep him at bay by talking enthusiastically of his lordship, but found the task too trying, as she also did when she sought refuge in a freezingly cold and distant demeanour.

"If some good fairy," she thought, "would only change the two men and turn his lordship into Harry, how happy I should be."

On the evening the Viscount was expected to return, they met in a secluded walk a mile from the hotel quite by accident. Kate cried very much, but otherwise behaved exceedingly well. "Good-bye," she said, "I am going to be a rich lord's wife, Mr. Mainwaring—silver and gold, houses and lands; there are better things than these, but they were not for us—good-bye," and then she threw herself into his arms and cried: "Save me, dear, save me; think—think—there must be some way," and Harry had walked back to the hotel and straight into Lady Shuldam's room to see if nothing could be done.

Her ladyship had dined and was now having a nap on the sofa. So the young man seated himself, determined to wait till the lady awoke.

Not knowing how to pass the time, he opened the memoirs, which happened to be at his elbow, and turned over the pages. He was smiling to himself and thinking what a sensation they would make when published, when he came to an entry which caused his heart to stand still.

"21st.—Received another letter from that infatuated young man in South Africa.

"22nd.—Kate asked me after breakfast if her lover had written. I have my faults, which of us have not, but my regard for the truth has always been more than a superstition, it has been my religion. Should I say: 'Yes, Kate, I have received a letter,' and thereby shatter the sweet girl's future? Summoning all my courage, I looked up from the book I was reading and said: 'No, I have had no letter.'

"23rd.—The recollection of the falsehood I told Kate yesterday still weighs heavily on me. I had little or no sleep during the night. I have burnt Mr. Mainwaring's letter."

Henry drew a deep breath and swore, but Lady Shuldam still slumbered.

The champion liar had eaten heavily at dinner. She always did when the tariff of the hotel she was stopping at was more than a pound a day.

At the hotel Verma it was thirty shillings, and her ladyship had partaken of every course.

"Virtue is not its own reward," murmured Harry, "but impudence is. Every man has a hand in the shaping of his destiny, and I mean to have a finger in moulding mine." He then placed the memoirs in his pocket, and stole softly from the room. On the staircase he met the Viscount, to whom he introduced himself and demanded an explanation.

Before the Viscount knew what he was doing Harry had him in the hotel grounds and was endeavouring to show him that his engagement with Miss Tounley was the result of a misunderstanding But the Viscount, like most dull men, was exceedingly obstinate. He had made up his mind to marry Kate, and he should keep his word.

"But if I can prove that an alliance with her family would bring your name into discredit."

His lordship got anxious, seeing which Harry immediately produced the memoirs.

"I have here, my lord," he said, "a manuscript work of great interest. I have read the work. Lady Shuldam's intimacy with the illustrious dead fills me with envy and wonder. Listen, my lord, to this:

"'My stay at the Court of Napoleon was a short one. The Empress, not without cause, was madly jealous.'"

The Viscount looked puzzled.

"'The late Lord Palmerston was the romantic fancy of my girlhood. I rejected him because he would insist on eating tripe and onions before he went to bed.'"

"Deuced funny!" murmured the Viscount.

"'The late Lord Beaconsfield was very lucky at double dummy. He won ten thousand of me before I discovered that he cheated.'"

"She'll never publish that," cried his lordship, his face betraying alarming signs of agitation.

"She will," replied Harry. "How do you like this?"

"'During a long reign of fifty years the Queen has always had rump steak and kidney pie for dinner on Tuesdays

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"'The liquid from which Mr. Gladstone derives such sustenance during his speeches is prepared from a receipt I presented him with.

"'I was always a great judge of character. Many years ago I was in Wales with my late husband. One day I saw a poor butcher boy in the street of a town, the name of which I forget, crying. I stopped the carriage and spoke to the lad. He told me his name was John Rowlands. I was much struck with his appearance, and remarked to my husband that evening: "Mark my words, that boy will be one day a great man; he has patience, courage and resource. He will develop into a great traveller and explorer." That boy, John Rowlands, is now known as Henry Stanley.'"

At this moment Mainwaring saw her ladyship approaching. She had missed the memoirs. Thrusting them into the Viscount's hands he retreated behind some fuschia bushes and waited.

"I have been reading your memoirs, Lady Shuldam," stammered the gentleman, "they are most extraordinary."

"Oh, my lord," replied her ladyship, much relieved, "a compliment from you is something to treasure."

"I don't mean that," blurted the Viscount getting very red in the face. "A lot of untruths—untruths. Do you mean to say you intend to publish this—this stuff?"

"Most certainly."

"Then I must ask you to release me from my engagement. I should be the laughing-stock of the country."

Her ladyship was now crimson with indignation.

"We release you most willingly; my memoirs are paramount to every consideration."

She then recovered possession of her MS., and sailed grandly away.

"How did he get hold of the memoirs?" she thought.

She was not destined to learn this, neither was she fortunate enough to discover the thief who robbed her of them.

The day before Mainwaring's marriage Kate had her suspicions, and one day was heard to say to her husband: "Now, Henry, dear, tell me the truth; wasn't it you who stole auntie's memoirs?" and Harry had whispered something in the soft ripples of his wife's hair which caused her to exclaim:

"You don't mean to say the memoirs were in that bag which fell overboard while we were crossing the channel. Oh! Harry, whoever would have thought you were so artful. Everybody thought it an accident. You looked so unconcerned."

"Of course, I did," replied her husband, "your aunt was present."

Kate thought it very deceitful, but she never told Lady Shuldam, who still laments their loss.

Arthur Goodrich.

FANCHETTE.

A slip of a girl with slim shoulders, childish form, and shy, rosy face, half avoiding, half inviting the gaze—this was Fanchette.

Fanchette Hugot they called her in the village, where old Mother Hugot was well known. But Fanchette shook her head. She was no kith and kin of Madame Hugot, that she knew, and Jacques knew it also, Jacques with his bonny brown head, and bright, bold face, and gay attire, which marked him of the better class. Jacques who loved her better than she loved the turkeys which she tended, and swore that every dark hair of her head under her red turban was precious to him.

Jacques' father called her the little turkey tender, and threw her a coin from his carriage as he passed. But Fanchette treasured the coins, and made herself more beautiful in her lover's eyes with her finery; ribbons that matched the blue of her eyes, and roses that rivalled the carmine of her dewy lips.

When Jacques took her in his arms and told her that he loved her, and let the light of his beautiful eyes shine into hers, she forgot the whole world just for that one moment. She forgot to wonder that God should let his creatures suffer so, that He should distribute blessings so unequally; she forgot that old Mother Hugot was a hard mistress, and forgave her the bruises on her poor body, and the unkind words she used towards her. She mounted into heaven when Jacques put his arms about her, and she could lean her head for a moment on his broad shoulders.

But these opportunities were seldom granted her for sinking her soul in Lethe; there were the cows to milk, and the pigs to feed, and the turkeys to tend, and when she could finally slip away to her lover whistling impatiently round the corner of the lane, she had but a few moments to spare to him from her mistress, who was impatient the instant the girl was out of her sight.

They used to watch the moon come up sometimes, round and fiery and glowing, in the soft, warm sky; and Jacques would claim a kiss for every star that appeared in the heavens as they watched. Ah, Fanchette loved the stars! One shone into her little casement at night, and she always thought of Jacques when she saw it, and his kisses seemed to her again laid on her lips as she fell asleep with her eyes fixed on the distant light.

Fanchette was very faithful to Mother Hugot, who grumbled at having to keep her, and called her shiftless and a good-for-nothing. But Fanchette knew from the tiny gold locket round her neck and from the embroidery on a bit of a gown Mother Hugot had shown her, that she was Jacques' equal, at least; and she always looked for a deliverer to come to her in some guise or other. Every morning when she arose she would say: "Perhaps, to-day my deliverer will come," and every night when she went to bed she prayed: "God, I thank thee that I am yet alive, for I know Thou wilt send me a great blessing to-morrow."

So when the fairy god-mother finally did arrive, Fanchette was the least surprised of any of the village.

When Jacques met her that evening in the lane, he laid his head down against her to hide his face, out of which the gay light had faded.

"You are going away," he cried, "to be a great lady. You have a title; you will live in a palace. I, poor Jacques, what shall I do? I think death would not be difficult."

"I shall come back, Jacques, in a year—they have promised me that—and then we can be married if you are waiting for me still. Parting is but a test for

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true love. Don't give your kisses or your love-words to other girls to make the time speed faster, my own Jacques. If I feel that you are all my own, in deed as in thought, there will be no sting in the sadness of our parting."

Jacques lifted up his head. The moon came up lightly over the lime trees, and shone upon his boyish face.

"I promise," he said, solemnly lifting his hand on high; and then he drew her dark head against his shoulder, and pressed her lips with his own.

"In a year from to-night I will meet you here. Oh, Fanchette, my love, my own, you will not fail me?"

"Never, Jacques, if I come in rags, I will keep my word. If I come a beggar, still I will meet you here."

"Remember our star, Fanchette. Every night I will look for it, and when you see its rays you will know your Jacques is dreaming of you and praying for your return."

When the sun chased the shadows from the earth the next morning, Fanchette was many miles away.

She went to a palatial home. She gowned herself in satins, and saw herself bedecked with jewels; she grew more fair than a poet's dream, and she danced with nobles, and was attended by aristocratic dames.

She was still Fanchette, and at night she looked at the stars she loved, and murmured the prayer of her childhood's days. Every heart-beat was for Jacques, every tear for Jacques, every smile for Jacques. She knew not if he were dead or living. When she was of age, at the end of the year, then she would know.

Her beauty expanded. Her eyes were deeper, her form rounder, her skin firmer, with a glow like polished marble. She carried her head with a saucy tilt, her lips melted into smiles, her cheeks dimpled. They called her Fanchette the lovable.

When eleven months had passed she put her arms about her newly-found father. She told him of her promise. She murmured Jacques' name with an intonation like a ring-dove in her voice: and a frown corrugated the old man's handsome brow. He flung her aside.

"Ingrate!" he cried stormily.

Fanchette kissed him sadly and crept away. Just at that moment she longed for the star-lighted lane, the coins that Father Badeau threw to the poor turkey driver, and the scoldings of Mother Hugot, with a heart-sickness that terrified her.

She never mentioned Jacques' name again. She stole from her room one night at the hour of twelve. She paused beyond in the corridor, and gave one glance behind her at the luxury-wrapped nest she had quitted. She saw gilded panels, shining mirrors reflecting, painted ceilings hung in roses, with a frieze of Cupid's soft, rich carpets, and lace-hung bed, where dreams of Jacques had circled round her drowsy head.

She saw her tiny satin shoes, subtly suggestive of indolence, and with a touch of her personality seeming to cling about them still as they lay discarded on the white fur rug before the fire. Her glance wandered to an open chest of antique wood close at hand, heaped up with the choicest treasures of the milliner's art. Here a fan coquetted with an opera-cloak, there a dainty ball-gown spread its filmsy flounces over a Parisian bonnet laden with purple violets.

She dropped a tear, she burst into a sob. Her woman's heart cried out after all this luxury. Her better nature whispered Jacques' name into her ear. The tear became as a rainbow, touched by her smile. She turned, and fled, crying:

"The world is well lost for love, my Jacques! I come, I come!"

In the old familiar trysting place at last, waiting for her lover, she echoed those words. She crouched down and kissed the turf, and the star-eyed marguerites, and laughed to herself softly and gleefully.

She heard his step at last. She rose with a new shyness born of her fresh beauty and her solemn joy.

"Jacques!"

"What, Fanchette! You! What! Fanchette in the rags of the turkey girl?" he stammerd.

"Oh, yes, Jacques, yes! The turkey girl, Fanchette, whom you love. Not the lady Fanchette ever again! I am yours, Jacques, yours!"

He dropped his hat from his hands; his rugged face paled, and his lips quivered.

She thought his joy unmanned him. He put both hands over his face and stood so, abashed before her dewy eyes. She brushed his hands with her red lips, and whispered to him:

"Look up, my Jacques. Surely you will speak to your own Fanchette? Oh, fie, friend Jacques, tears for joy, forsooth! Methinks that is worthy a woman. What? Will you not look at me? They say that I am greatly changed—a beauty, Jacques, your little Fanchette! Are you not glad?"

She was sobbing and laughing and clinging to him; the moon showed her dimples and her soft, quivering lips, and her new great beauty to him in a maddening way. Her hair fell around him, her warm arms were laid upon his shoulders, she was leaning against him, delicious in her womanly gladness. But he did not touch her after the first involuntary caress. He dropped upon one knee at her feet, and laid his face against her hand.

Their star on high looked down upon them benignly.

"Look, Jacques, look—our star! Do not kneel to me, my own Jacques, do not, I pray! See, it is smiling at us, it is happy, too. The year is past, is past, Jacques, let us thank the good God together. But first will you not kiss me? Am I to sue for it then? Dear friend, do not give way thus. I am here close beside you, Jacques; I will never leave you now, love, unless you bid me go."

"I bid you go."

The voice was hoarse, agonised with deathly anguish in its modulations.

"Jacques!"

"I am married."

He caught her, held her to him as her eyes closed, and cursed himself.

"Fanchette, Fanchette, look up and listen! Oh, heavens, I hate myself! I married Rosamond Cartier six months ago. I—I thought you would not come back. Father influenced me——"

"Don't!" Fanchette said.

She seemed more beautiful than ever when she stood up again. But Jacques could not bear to look at her.

She slipped away from him over the grass towards Mother Hugot's house.

"Come to our house, Fanchette," he pleaded.

But she shook her head, lifted the latch and went in.

She is the turkey tender once again. She sees Jacques' wife roll by in her carriage. She is humble and patient; but she prays the old prayer no more.

All that remains of the past are the stars, and on calm nights, when she looks out of her window, she still fancies, as she weeps herself into troubled dreamland, that Jacques is once again claiming a kiss for every star in the crowded heavens.

P. Gowler.

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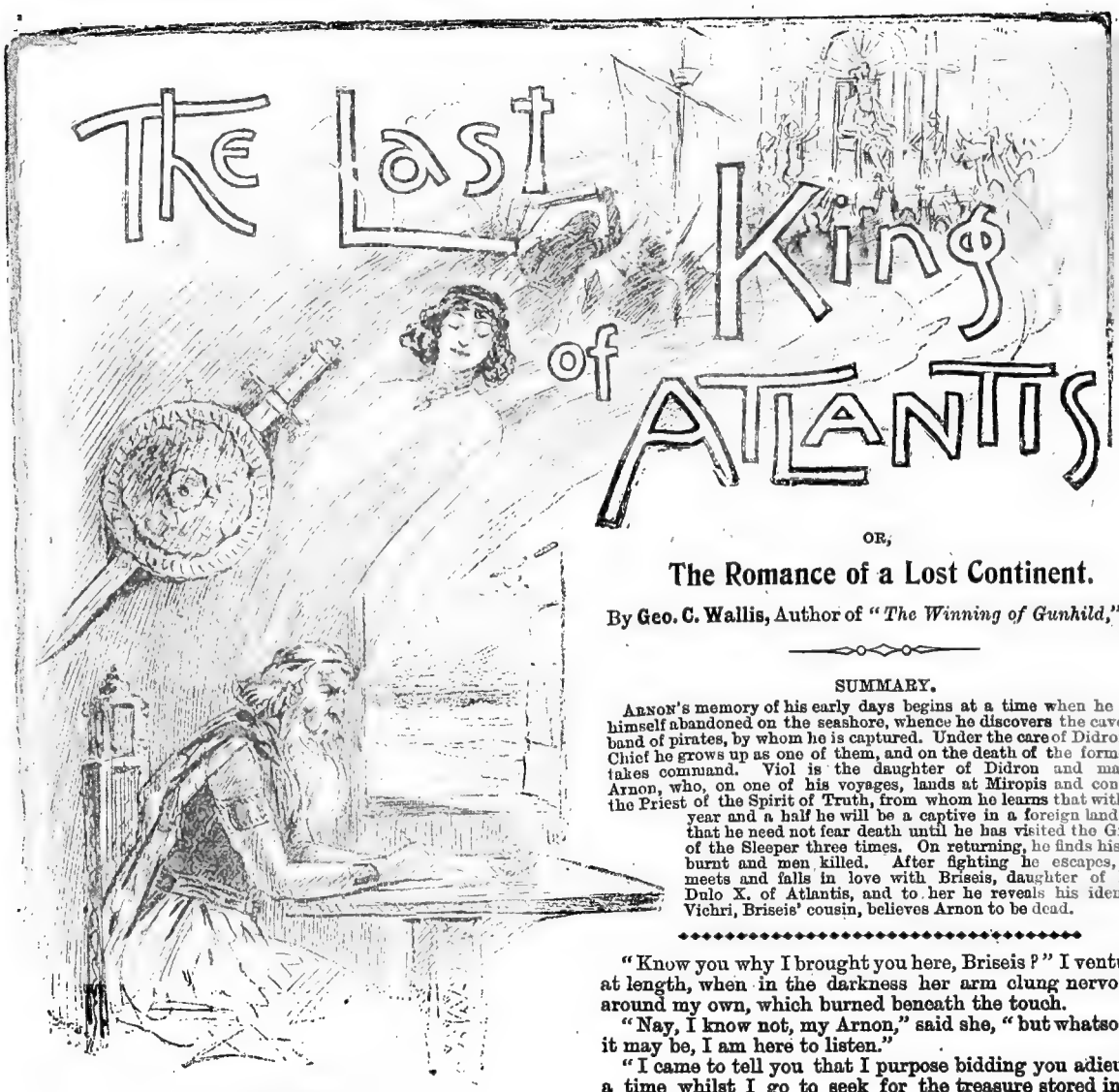

OR,

The Romance of a Lost Continent.

By **Geo. C. Wallis**, Author of "*The Winning of Gunhild*," etc.

SUMMARY.

Arnon's memory of his early days begins at a time when he finds himself abandoned on the seashore, whence he discovers the cave of a band of pirates, by whom he is captured. Under the care of Didron the Chief he grows up as one of them, and on the death of the former he takes command. Viol is the daughter of Didron and marries Arnon, who, on one of his voyages, lands at Miropis and consults the Priest of the Spirit of Truth, from whom he learns that within a year and a half he will be a captive in a foreign land, and that he need not fear death until he has visited the Grotto of the Sleeper three times. On returning, he finds his ship burnt and men killed. After fighting he escapes, and meets and falls in love with Briseis, daughter of King Dulo X. of Atlantis, and to her he reveals his identity. Vichri, Briseis' cousin, believes Arnon to be dead.

CHAPTER V.

BETRAYAL.

Five months thus gaily passed in the whirl of court life before I mustered courage to make an end of it. But the pirate spirit was still strong in me, and I began to long for the swell of the boundless sea.

So one balmy night when the evening breezes seemed to whisper rest and sweet content, I led Briseis to a deep, umbrageous grove, where the silver shafts of moonlight found few weaknesses in the armour of the trees through which to glint, unwelcomed, on a lovers' meeting. It had been a great feast day, and the house and gardens had been thronged with guests of their fair owner, many of whom—rich, young nobles, moneyless adventurers, and even miserly old men, dissolute all—were suitors, eager, pressing for the favour of her hand. These I had scowled upon right scornfully, provoking many a taunt at my sour visage from the polished wits, whose shafts, however, I had learned to answer with consummate cunning; but now all were gone, and alone we strolled to the leafy retreat, and alone sat there together, each waiting for the other to break the mystic spell of its dim and silent solitude.

"Know you why I brought you here, Briseis?" I ventured at length, when in the darkness her arm clung nervously around my own, which burned beneath the touch.

"Nay, I know not, my Arnon," said she, "but whatsoever it may be, I am here to listen."

"I came to tell you that I purpose bidding you adieu for a time whilst I go to seek for the treasure stored in the pirates' cave."

Briseis started and gave a little cry, a strange thing for her to do, who, for all her youth and beauty, was so very grave and dignified in all her acts, and then asked, in tones wherein anxiety and curiosity were quaintly intermixed:

"Have you not all you want, my Iron-fingers? And am I a cruel mistress, that you would leave my service so scurvily?"

Now my heart sank again, for I thought she surely liked me only as a trusty servant, whose prowess only reflected the greater glory on herself as the fortunate possessor of such a serf, and I answered somewhat bitterly:

"I have all I want, my mistress, but my liberty, and even your gentleness cannot replace me that. Give me liberty, let me find the wealth, and then I stand your equal."

Her arm here disengaged itself from mine, and she drew herself a little way from me on the rustic seat to where a stray moonbeam fell upon her marble brow and the clustering curls of her jet-black hair.

"Ungrateful!" she cried reproachfully. "When I have healed your wounds, screened you from certain death, given you the best that my wealth can procure—even pardoned

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you the cutting off my cousin's ear, though he is my nearest of kin; when I have done all this you ask for liberty; you want to shake me off as one who has been of use, but is no longer desired! Men call you iron-fingered; methinks you must be iron-hearted, too. I thought you were a true man, but you have broken that trust, and I am minded to betray you to the king for your cruel, careless callousness. But, no! I have befriended you and been deceived, but you can go secure and free, only see to it that you cross not my threshold any more." And the speaker rose to her feet, holding out her arm in picturesque command, her eyes blazing with passion.

I was not the least dumfoundered or dismayed by this fiery outburst, but pleased, for I thought that no mistress would be so distressed for the loss of a mere bond-slave, and, therefore, seizing her dainty hand again and holding it fast, in spite of her little struggles, I asked:

"Would you call me ungrateful, Briseis, if I told you wherefore I wanted my liberty?"

I felt that dear hand tremble for a moment like a frightened bird fluttering in the fowler's net before she answered, speaking softly now:

"I do not know, my Arnon; tell me, I pray."

"Because," I said, my boldness coming back with the confidence her words inspired, "because, Briseis, I would be free that I might be rich; rich, that I might be your equal; your equal, that I might become your life-long slave, bound fast by the flawless fetters of love. Nay, I am bound by them already; but I would fain they were the only ties, for I think they will bear the strain."

"Ungrateful!" she cried reproachfully.

Then, it seemed almost instantly, I felt a pair of soft, warm arms wound lovingly about my neck, a throbbing frame clung closely to my side, a velvet cheek was pressed upon my rough, scarred face, a fringe of softest hair brushed across my forehead with magnetic thrill, and twin sweet lips touched mine in a soul-given kiss that made the nerves to tingle with delirious delight, and the flood of life to course through every vein and every artery like molten fire. I clasped my Briseis in my strong, bare arms then and held her fast.

"My love," she murmured, after a sweet silence, "didst not see that I loved thee before—loved thee from that day when first I saw thee, all blackened by the cruel fire, sleeping soundly in my garden?"

"Nay, dear one," I replied contritely, "I saw it not, deeming that you valued me only as a bond-servant."

"Then, sir, you were blind indeed, for all your cleverness! But now I see why you want your freedom. Well, shalt have it, for I may not marry you unless you be my equal, being of Royal blood. Go, then, and bring your treasure, and Briseis will await you as a bride."

I said, and truly, how vastly I should grudge the time of absence, and asked from whence I should obtain a vessel and a crew to aid me in my search. These Briseis promised me with pleasure, and presently, the night having sped apace, we rose and went back to the house, the frogs that harbour in the grass croaking dismally as we walked, though for all else the night had that oppressive stillness which at any other time had made me sad and restless, but which now, as through the paths we knew so well, my love and I went side by side with new found joy in every thought, was full of soothing symphonies.

So I sought me out a crew as soon as I could tear myself from the house of Briseis, and my sweetheart bought me a trusty ship and gave me sufficiency of coin to pay my men and stock the vessel, and got me a signetted safeguard against his warships from old Dulo himself.

Soon it was noised abroad that I went to seek for secret treasure, and when the object of my quest was known, Phrena, the Iron-fingered, had little trouble to get him a band of sturdy, reckless fellows, ready to face anything or journey anywhere they might be led. In about a month I had all ready, and after bidding good-bye to Briseis, I set sail with a favouring breeze and a light heart, confident of the future, and well pleased that once more I could put hand to the helm.

That parting in the grove, where her arms had encircled my neck, was in strange contrast to that last parting from little Viol, whom the king's soldiers had slain along with her babe and all friends; for then my love had never thought to see my face again, and I had laughed at her fears only to find them true, but this time nor Briseis nor I feared or thought aught different than that we separated

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for a little time that we might unite in closer ties thereafter.

"May the gods speed you, and the wind blow steady till you return," said the maid, a tear trembling on her eyelid's verge for all her smiles.

"Trust them," I said, "for I fear not death, if the priest spoke truly. Keep heart, sweet one, and I shall be back in a very short season."

Ah! little thought I then what Fate had in store for me; little did we dream how long that short season of absence would be! How long you shall know if you read on.

A storm fell upon us.

Out into the ocean we sailed for many days, but either the treasure cave was further off than I had deemed, or my memory played me false, for sail and search as we would, day by day and night by night, I never caught glimpse of that strip of sand backed by its frowning cliffs and bounded by its sullen, rugged headlands. The sky kept clear, and the sun bright, and the sea calm, as is its wont to be under a trade-wind blowing without a storm, but, voyage as we might, I never had view of that precious shore.

I grew moody and irritable, finding fault with the men when there was no need, clapping on sail when the gale blew strongest, running before the wind with recklessness many a time and oft—which same folly, I verily believe, lost me the right direction—making the slaves row when the sails would have sufficed, and being as miserable a man as hopeless love could make me, disliked and feared by the crew, and hated by the wretched rowers as only those chained-down beings can hate.

Once I got on the right track, as I thought, and for two days ran with all press of sail and every oar going to a measured stroke, and my heart grew light again, and I laughed and joked and sang with the merry crew as though I had ever been a prince of good fellows, and the men, themselves all feverish for sight of the promised gold in which all were to have a goodly share, drank my health in boisterous jollity, some even asking me if I would lead them a-pirating in the ship when the hoard was found.

I tore the scented missive into a hundred tattered shreds.

But on the second day, like a thunder-blast, a storm fell upon us such as I had never seen before, and drove our craft through the flying clouds of spray like a cockleshell.

Five days we laboured in the stress of the tempest, now nearing the breakers on a rock-bound coast, and sheering off again by the merest touch, now battling with the giant waves which rolled in countless numbers over our drenched and beaten vessel, and anon just escaping the destruction lurking in a sunken reef; and through it all, with every mast overboard and leaking at a dozen places, the ship lived on, keeping straight before the wind, not losing a man of all her crew. And when that cursed storm went down, the first clear view of land that we obtained was of the verdant shores of Atlantis, not a dozen leagues from the town of Miropis!

Half beside myself with rage, all the more acute after the hope raised, I was minded to put back to sea all dilapidated as we were, but on second thoughts deemed it wiser to run into the harbour of the town and there repair our damages. Thither, then, seizing the helm, I pointed our prow, and soon came in sight of the low, wooded shore and the white roofs of the town, plainly outlined underneath the rays of the late afternoon sun.

As our vessel sailed slowly in, two warships lying at anchor slipped cables and stood out to meet us, for what reason I could not guess, but to which, feeling secure with the king's safe conduct in my keeping, I paid no heed till they drew alongside and hailed us. A man on the quarter-deck, armed from top to toe and backed by a large number of soldiers, was the first to speak as our disabled and rakish-looking craft rubbed sides with his own.

I began to fear, then, that something strange was in the wind, especially when I saw the man in command, for I knew him as one of the cleverest swordsmen in the capital, whom I had defeated in a trial of skill with his favourite weapon, so hailed back:

"What mean'st this, Sothi, son of Ombos?"

"A message from the King," he answered, waiting till the other vessel hove alongside before he added, "and one that I must deliver to you in person on the deck of your own vessel, Arnon, the son of Didron, known to most as Phrena, the Iron-fingered!"

And Sothi laughed softly to himself as one who sees his enemy in a trap.

"Call me what you will," I retorted hotly, "but out with your fool's message and be about your business, so that I may not be troubled further."

Then, the sailors having laid the gangway plank across from ship to ship, Sothi and a score of his soldiers came on

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board, and he put into my hand, with a mocking smile, the King's message. I took it with an ill grace, and this is what I read:

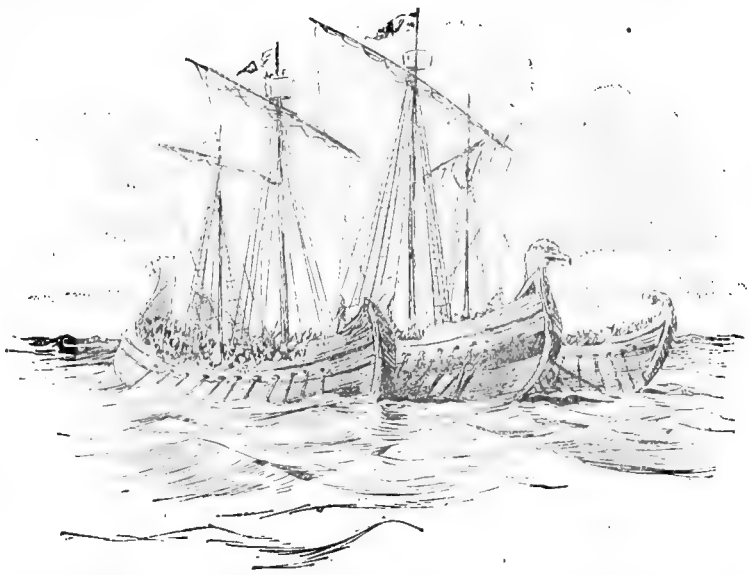
"To Sothi, son of Ombos, the Captain of our Guard, is given the duty of obeying these our commands: That when Arnon, the son of Didron the Pirate, who hath named himself as Phrena, and been named by men the Iron-fingered, shall return to Atlantis with his treasure, it shall be given up by him to the Royal Treasury without complaint, and that he, Arnon, shall be stripped of all his favours and dealt with as my servant Sothi shall think well, except that he may not slay him.

"Given with our Royal Signet, in the Temple of Life and in the presence of the Priest of Life,

"DULO X."

Once, twice, I read this piece of royal bluster, then tore the scented missive into a hundred tattered shreds and threw them overboard.

"*That* is my answer to the King's decree," I said to Sothi, who stared with surprise. "Go, tell those who sent you not to send you again without the King himself and his army at his back. But first tell me how you came to know my name?"



An evil smile, so evil that my heart felt cold as I saw it, came over Sothi's face as he answered—that accursed answer which filled my sober, thoughtful hours with bitterness for near a score of years from thence:

"There is one only in Kronos who knows you rightly, save I and the King, and she thought she loved you. Her thoughts have changed. Need I speak thee further?"

In that awful moment I first knew the dreadful pang of jealousy, and it seemed to rend my very soul into a thousand aching, quivering threads of agony. Briseis, whom I had loved so dearly and parted from so hardly; Briseis, who alone had healed the wound of my grief for the loss of Viol; Briseis, who was the only star that beamed in my cloudy sky; Briseis to have betrayed me thus!

I thought my blood had turned to fire and that my reason tottered to its fall, but with a great effort, gathering my swimming senses, it came over me that if love was gone and false love was arrayed against me, vengeance and a warlike death remained. So, with sword flashing, I leapt on Sothi and his men, and called to my crew to follow me and clear the vessel of the King's dogs.

Some followed, and fought hard, and died well, but most hung back—the craven hearts! And soon I stood alone, at bay in the stem of the ship, and a host of foes in front, striving to bring me down without killing me, Sothi himself, remembering my prowess, keeping judiciously in the rear.

Long I stood there with madness in my face, and fierce despair gnawing at my heart, and superhuman strength nerving my arm to its work. So terribly I struck and pierced, so sure was death to follow the light of my shining steel, so many blades there seemed to hover in the air when there was only one, that, when two score of them lay piled in a writhing heap before me, the soldiers gave back a moment.

But on they came again, and though the sword ravened in my hand as it had never done before, and though I fought more wildly, more desperately, as my strength waned, yet at last I must be beaten, and when three stalwart fellows rushed upon me at once, pinning my sword-arm to the bulwark with their long spears, I was easily secured, and strongly bound with twisted thongs of hide.

They left me where I had fought whilst they went to seek the treasure, not heeding the protestations of my remaining crew, and how I laughed, when crestfallen, one by one, the searchers came on deck again. Certes! their faces were a sight to make the dead laugh! Sothi asked me roughly how was it that we had not the riches on board, averring that we had hidden them before we had touched Miropis. To his questions I answered, surlily enough, that if he could find the wealth he was welcome to it, but that torture would not wring it from me and could not from the crew.

He replied that he would see for himself the truth of that, and forthwith gave orders to screw the facts out of all who belonged to my vessel. Some of the victims fainted, one died, but none could tell more than that I alone knew where the treasure was hidden and had failed to find it.

Thereupon I swore that sooner than lead anyone to it, if I could find the way, I would die of torment, and Sothi, being greedy for a share of the wealth, said he would put to the test likewise. But the soldiers cried shame on him for it, admiring me for the courage with which I had held them at bay, so in the end I escaped that misery. After debating for a long time what he should do with me, Sothi at length decided, condemning me to life-servitude as a rower in a slave-galley just then ready to set sail for the eastern slave country. For this I reviled the wretch as long and bitterly as my sharpened tongue would allow, for of all fates that is the worst.

At dawn the ship would sail, and at eve, therefore, was I sent on board, one boon only being granted me—to keep my long, trusty blade with bloodstains burnt into it by fire. To keep it, I say, but that was all, for having sheathed it, Sothi commanded that it should be bound tightly to my back, so that I could not by any means move it, and one word only being spoken to the captain of the vessel to hold his peace, for I was a troublesome captive.

Now in my misery and madness I grew crafty, and when the three ships had drawn off, leaving me on board the slaver, I asked the captain to let me tell him my story. He was a little, voluptuous man, who liked to idle whilst his men were working, but had, withal, a kindly, generous heart, so he sat down upon a coil of rope and bade me tell it him if I pleased, adding, however, as roughly as he could, that I needn't hope he would let me set foot on shore again now they had shown him the signet of the King.

To which I said that my desire was not that, but only to

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avoid, if it might be, the horrors of the rowing pit beneath the deck. So I told as much as I thought needful to move his heartstrings in my favour, in which I succeeded beyond my highest hopes, and before the sailing of the vessel my fetters were undone, and I was once more a free man whilst I chose to keep my feet off Atlantian soil.

A good soul was that captain, for all his love of ease, and firm friends grew we as I, little by little, displayed my knowledge of sea craft, and showed him how I could manage his ship for him during many a spell of sleep and many a drunken bout in his cabin.

He even cracked a skin of fine mountain nectar from his own store with me—for the slavers are rich folk—as we talked together on the clean washed deck, and when I ventured to tell him how I had nearly captured his vessel—for, strange is the irony of Fate, I recognised in this vessel which was to bear me away to a foreign land, that flying barque which the *Ravager* failed to seize upon now nearly a year agone—when I ventured to tell him this, I thought he would split his sides with mirth, so mightily was he amused, and so well pleased that his vessel was swifter than the most notorious pirate ship that ever skimmed the tropic sea.

Just as the full round orb of day leapt into the waiting sky, we drew our anchors and stood forth down the wide waterway, and as we slowly passed from view of that accursed, bibulous town, with its gaudy oil lamps still burning on into the rosy dawn, I shook my clenched hands at it, in spite of the pain my wounds gave me, and swore a mighty oath by the Three Eternal Spirits, that if ever I set foot within its tawdry streets again, it should be as a conqueror and avenger, and in that guise only.

Cool blew the freshening breeze as we neared the sea, and my wrath went down and my misery abated at the sight of my native element opening out before me in all its grandeur, and once more as we left that hateful town behind and swept through the narrowing channel of the bay, the pirate blood ran eddying in my veins with quickened speed and new-born joy.

None so love the surging, restless sea as I; none so love to watch the great rollers breaking into foam on rocky coasts, the quiet tide bubbling harmlessly in little creeks and on shady forest shores, the birds that skim its broad expanse, the petrel that rides on the wings of the gale and lives in the spray, the glory of the noonday sun upon it, or the pillars of silver moonlight shimmering adown its liquid glades; none so love the sea in every mood so well as I, and yet when our barque ploughed the trackless waste of ocean, and the land was gone from sight, my old pain-sorrow came back with tenfold force.

The captain would have cheered me, but 'twas vain; silent and moody I went about my work, and silent and moody I sat in my leisure time thinking of the evil crowded into my last year of life.

Long and moodily I brooded till I almost doubted if the spirits lived, and had well-nigh cursed them if I thought they did, and ever that which caused my greatest grief was not the death of golden-haired Viol, or my son Didron, but the treachery, the sudden falseness of my love, my Briseis; she who had seemed as different to guile as blackest midnight is to most unclouded sun.

Long I pondered on it, but found no answer to the riddle from all my mind's troubling, so at last, perforce, must cease to wear myself with it, coming at length, I said to myself, to hate her whom I had loved, yet knowing through it all that I loved her still, whom I should have hated. Thus in time a calmness grew upon me and my sailor spirits returned, so that I became a favourite on board the flying slaver-barque with wide-spread sails.

CHAPTER VI.

The Nubian Revolt.

Day after day we journeyed to the east, where I had never ventured in the *Ravager*, and day after day fresh sights burst on my bewildered eyes. There were many islands, now, alas! buried under the pitiless waters, and some of them were scenes of beauty unsurpassed, inhabited by a blue-eyed, fair-skinned, sweetly-spoken race, all sailors, well equipped with great canoes.

Fain would I have made my dwelling there, amongst those lovely islands with their tapered mountain tops, their steep and rocky shores, their darkly-shadowed woods, their restless breakers on the harbour-bars, their peaceful, mellow eves, their calm and starry-brightened nights, and their nearly perfect people, whose innocence made the house ever welcome to the stranger, and ever set his life to sweet enjoyment; but my captain would not hear of it. I was one of his crew, he said, if I was not a slave as I should have been, and he allowed no deserters.

So I had to sigh and look content, and amuse myself with watching as the swift vessel sped on.

One day, as I was thus employed, the wind having gone down and the oars beating the water with measured strokes, whilst the captain lay asleep under the shade of the bulwarks, I saw a ship, urged forward by her banks of oars, coming rapidly up with us from the west. I woke the captain, called the crew together, and pointed it out.

"'Tis a pirate ship," I said, "and if you do not keep your distance from her, we shall be the slaves, instead of making any."

So he clapped on sail, but the wind, though it gave signs of rising, was not enough for present hope, and though the sailors went down into the rowing pit, and flogged the miserable wretches there till the blood must needs be bailed out into the sea, on came that pirate ship, taking us up, hand over hand. We were in despair (for it never came into my mind to desert my protector in his time of need), till the ship came close enough for me to see her name. Then I knew her, and knew her owner for a friend of Didron, whose hunting ground was in the eastern seas, and was no longer afraid.

"Stand back!" I said to the crew, getting into the prow with sword in hand, for my arm was healed, "and leave this matter to me."

Soon she came to hailing distance and her captain cried:

"Heave to, ye fat, old merchants! In the name of Tirhak the Pirate, ship your oars!"

Loud and clear across the water my answer rang:

"Arnon the son of Didron ships not his oars for a thousand threats. Go your way; I go mine."

"So 'tis the son of Didron," he answered, seeing me as the vessels drew closer, "but even so, tell me wherefore you go a-pirating in a trade ship like that, and wherefore you are in my waters? For this last I could sink you, as I could sink Didron himself."

"If you *could!*" I said. "But I am not pirating, Tirhak. 'Tis a slave cargo I seek, and for that reason you will not molest me. But try my teeth and you will find that the young cub can bite as well as bark!"

"Talk not so braggartly!" roared back old Tirhak, the vessels now drawing apart again, "lest I even now stop to give you a lesson."

"Farewell!" I cried, as a parting shot. "Braggarts are not always young!"

"I waste no time on thankless tasks," I heard him say, and then no more, as the gale, now freshening from the west-nor'-west, caught us and bore us away, and the pirate craft sank back into the haziness of cloud-hung sky and mist-covered sea to windward. Thus I repaid my debt of gratitude to the slaver captain, and thenceforth was a traveller on board, his friend, and no longer a sailor by name, though I must keep my hands employed whenever the good soul sat nodding in his cabin over that hillside wine!

At length we made the coast of Nubia, as they called that fierce, tropic land, and one day, just as even fell, we steered in and let anchor down at the mouth of a small river, the last Atlantian slave-ship whose keel has grated on the slaveland shore.

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A little higher up the river was the town, to be secure from sea attacks, and thither we purposed going in our boats at dawn, not caring to face the unknown terrors of those tangled, overhanging forests in the misty night. Indeed, I had misgivings of the wisdom of setting foot anywhere on that vast land, whose coasts are thick with miasmatic mists and unseen, poisonous exhalations, and whose inland woods are peopled with a thousand savage tribes, both dwarf and giant, of whose cruelty and cunning the slaves tell such sickening tales. Verily a Land of Dread, which only greed could make men penetrate.

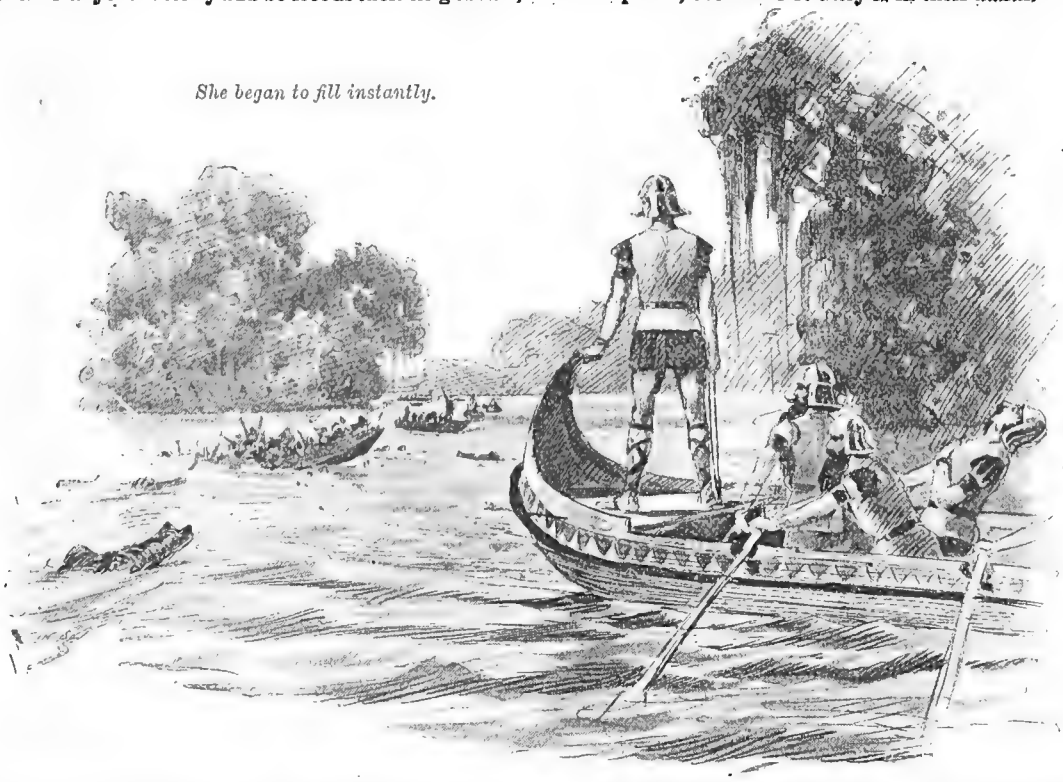
Moreover, I had heard vague, dark rumours when at court that the coast of Nubia which our colonists held—though but a tithe of what had once been ours in the years of Atlantis' greatness—was held by a very slender thread, and it needed only for the Nubians to feel their strength to shake off our yoke utterly and be free as their neighbours, he had known the old water-side man many years, "as of yore, moored at the river's mouth; will there be many slaves to be bought in the market next settling, think you?"

The old waterman heeded not this query, but cried agitatedly, referring to our vessel.

"And hast left her there, and thy crew are not watchful, the rebels will have gained her by this, for they watch the coast well."

"What mean'st thou?" cried my Captain, seizing old Teli and shaking him like a rat, "out with it man, and let us be knowing what has happened since I left."

"The Nubians have risen," answered he of the panther skin, shaking off the rough grasp, "and their canoes lie hidden all along the shore, ready to seize any vessel left as thine is. Moreover, saving this town and three other walled places, the whole country is in their hands."



She began to fill instantly.

saving when the soldiers of that mysterious northern land of Khem should swarm down and tread them under foot.

Therefore, having all these forebodings in my mind, notwithstanding that my captain laughed at them for a homester's fears, 'twas with a testing of my sling and a sharpening of my sword that I prepared to take seat in the boat at morn.

Past curving narrows in the river, under vast o'erarching trees, leafy and bird-thronged, near perilous mudbanks where black-snouted alligators treacherously dozed, over floating lumps of weed and through thick beds of waving rushes, we made our way up stream, and as noon with its scorching heat fell upon us, burning and blistering everywhere, we pulled up at the town, now silently sleeping its midday rest. An old man, clad scantily in panther skin, greeted us as our stern swung round on the stone quayside.

"May the spirits guard you, Captain; hast left your ship in safety?"

"As of yore, Teli," said the Captain, in a careless way, for

"Back all! and pull for your lives!" roared the Captain, "jump in, you, and shove off, and down to the ship before these accursed rebels seize her!"

So down the stream we went, leaving Teli staring after us and shaking his head in misgiving, and pulling with a will, till the perspiration streamed from us under that broiling sun, and the oars slipped through our hands with the moisture, we came in sight of the ship again. In sight, but no nearer.

All round her, like birds of prey round a carcase, the sea was black with long narrow canoes, most of which were filled by the strong, lithe Nubians, thick-lipped and woolly-headed, all signing and vociferating one to another with evident delight, for the ship was theirs already, we could see, and those rebels on board were arming the released rowers as well, and as quickly as they were able.

"A plague on the black-skinned fiends!" cried the Captain, seeing himself ruined. "May the Powers of the Darker Shadows take them for their own for ever!"

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"Rather curse our own countrymen," I said, "for putting no signal to warn all incoming ships."

By this time they had seen us, and before the Captain could make reply, were upon us with shoutings and yellings and a rain of arrows. One or two fell out of our boat, then, with a will but also with muscles already tired with rowing, we put about, and strove hard up the stream, the rabble after us, jostling their canoes one against another, overturning not a few, and keeping up a clumsy, harmless discharge of arrows and javelins.

But our arms were weary, having done the distance twice already that sultry day, and soon the foremost canoe, containing close on fifty of the rebels, was so near, that with their throwing-darts they effectually prevented us from steering and keeping our way. This could not last, so I ordered the men to rest on their oars and keep steady whilst I gave the foe a greeting.

They obeyed, and standing up in the stern, defying the Nubian missiles, I swung the sling round fiercely, waiting till the free end of the rude canoe was within a fathom of our helm, and then, with a mighty, hissing whirl, sent the leaden bullet crashing through the curving side of the canoe, just below the waterline.

She began to fill instantly, and her crew, thrown into sudden confusion, fell in a heap in the middle of her, assisted in their activity by a shower of arrows from our men. Some of the terrified rebels leaped into the river, thinking to escape that way, but from the right bank three long, scaly bodies slid into the water and glided across, followed by a couple more, and then a pair from the left bank, and soon nothing but a spreading circle of blood-stained, rippling water told where the swimmers had been.

Then, we pulled on with might and main, reaching the town before the brief twilight, angry, weary, ruined, but at least alive. Thus, I thought, was broken the last link that bound me to Atlantis, heeding not the priest's prophecy, although so far it was well fulfilled.

We silently marched out upon the beaten track.

The town, now the evening coolness had fallen, was all astir with an anxious, fearsome populace, amazed at our safe return, wondering how long the King would be before he sent to rescue them, and dreading the moment when the Nubians would feel confidence enough to attack the place.

Bit by bit I learnt the history of the outbreak. How in a single night the rebels had risen, massacred their masters by scores and hundreds, seizing their women as prisoners, burning unfortified villages and towns, laying waste all cultivated areas, and destroying cattle; how they had swarmed forth suddenly on all the lakes and rivers, and on the coast in fleets of rough canoes, of whose existence the settlers had never dreamed, and in which they surrounded and captured every ship then in their ports, and all that had since arrived; how sortie after sortie of our soldiers into the forest-depths in pursuit of bands of the desperate enemy had gone but never returned; and how at length all the Atlantians left alive in the great territory were cooped up in four towns, well garrisoned and fortified, but scantily prepared with food and water, the most eastward being on the far coast.

I heard the story, thought it over long and gloatingly, exulting in my mind that this evil had fallen on Atlantis, where I had met with naught but misery and treachery, and having roundly upbraided the townsfolk for their fears and their carelessness, telling them that they would certainly be buried under the ruin of their own houses before help from the mother country could reach them if they did not acquit themselves more like men instead of acting like a herd of stricken deer, I retired to an upper room and there sat brooding, thinking—not of my present dangers, but of the unaccountable falseness of my beloved Briseis.

'Twas such a monstrous perfidy that one who had tended my wounds, screened my identity, and sworn a deathless love so passionately, should so soon turn round and speak the words that had sent me away an exile.

Time after time I cried aloud in my anguish and perplexity that it could not be; my sweet, dark beauty could not be so heartlessly untrue, so vindictively false, and yet it must have been, for how else could Sothi have learned my real name, how else have revoked the King's safe conduct that I held, when one and one only knew my secret, and that one—Briseis?

True, Vichri, her cousin, with one ear missing, might have returned and shrewdly suspected the true character of Phrena, and demanded my punishment, but if so he would surely have sought me out in person, and surely in such case, Briseis would have interceded for me, both with him and with her royal kinsman, and I had not been dealt with thus.

Far into the night, almost till the dawn sprang into being with the fulness of its busy life, I sat torturing my mind with vain interpretations of the mystery, always ending as before with the hopeless thought that Briseis, whom I had deemed pure as a country amaryllis, must indeed be false, and wishing I could hate her for it, yet knowing through all the clouds of doubt and shadow that I loved her fondly, madly still!

In weariness I made essay to sleep, and when the hour of the first meal came was ill-fitted to face the present dilemma.

But as I looked on war as a man's highest calling then, the prospect of strife ahead served to somewhat calm my restlessness and infuse some small zest into the affairs of life; some interest in the morrow.

Many weeks we stayed in that town, sorely beleagured by the Nubian hosts, which latter were led and reinforced by many deserters from the Atlantian garrisons and villages. These deserters were called Ethiopians, after the chief renegade, one Ethiop, who had been high in the colony, but who had devoted his wealth and talents to freeing the native people.

Multitudinous and bitter were the imprecations called down upon his head by the townsmen, for if the land were lost to Atlantis for ever, as seemed then likely, and is now too true, there would be an end of all the luxurious merchandise from far-off Ind, that mystic country in the vast and wealthy East, where, so report and hearsay has it, the rivers roll down jewels plentifully as our streams rub rounded pebbles in their scooped-out beds; where gold lies

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in masses so huge and widespread that cities are built, from paving and foundation blocks to towering turrets and tapering spires, of naught but the yellow gleaming metal, and where a million fruits and a myriad flowers, such as those only who have seen them can imagine, grow, blossom, ripen, and seed in such prodigal profusion that nothing noxious can there live. Thus rumour whispers. I have found that these golden dreams of enchanted lands vanish into the thinness of a morning mist when the eyes of the flesh once glance upon the vision.

Distracted, dejected, and hungry, weary with waiting and watching for the help that never came, tired of the ceaseless vigil that must needs be kept against the wiles of Ethiop and his savage hordes, and strung to the highest tension with suspense, because no news came from the other three towns, we determined to abandon the place, and marching to the others in turn, unite our forces, hoping as a forlorn hope to thus defy the Nubians, and, perhaps, carry the war into their own camp.

So one morning we started—not thinking it wise to brave the night terrors of that forest, with its weird, whistling trees, at first—with sad and doubting hearts, the women leaving their houses untidy, the table left from the scanty, hasty meal, the fire yet burning that had cooked it, and the doors and casements open for the first intruder to enter unforbidden; the men leaving their tasks unfinished—the fisher taking away his nets, the dealer leaving his useless goods heaped up in bulky bales, the woodman his piles of rough-hewn timber, the worker in bricks and pottery his stores of baked and modelled clay, and the maker of coloured glass his costly array of exquisite and brittle ware.

All were left disorderly, and we marched out upon the beaten track with heavy hearts, a silent, melancholy band forsaking a town more silently melancholy still, abandoned to spoliation and decay. With anxious, earnest eyes we kept a constant watch for sign or sound of the enemy, whom we knew to be lurking somewhere in the dense, shaded woods, since they had apparently withdrawn from round the town, but, strangely enough, were unmolested, and reached the nearest friendly post unharmed.

If we expected help and welcome there, we were sorely disappointed. Nothing but a silent ruin, mournful as the place we had deserted, met our tired eyes. We ran through all the streets, into all the houses, penetrated into every nook and crevice, trod every patch of ground in that still, dead city, made the air quiver with our shouts and calls, heedless of the possible proximity of the foe, but not a living being did we find save sundry fierce, gaunt cats, who disputed with us the passage of the narrowest streets.

With many maledictions from the men and bitter bewailings and tears from the women, we set out once more, this time with our faces to the south-east, hoping against hope that our next stopping-place would find us friends and shelter. Again we were allowed safe travelling by Ethiop and his army, whose visible presence was withheld from us, though indications of his passing were strong and numerous.

Everywhere villages and unprotected towns lay ruined and forsaken, save where, here and there, a timid child remained, or a woman rocking herself in agony over the dead whom she had loved, or a man wandered aimlessly among the fallen buildings, gone mad with grief and rage and solitude and despair. Everywhere that Ethiop had been a trail of blood and fire marked his passing, like the scorching, blackening march of a host of demons from the densest shade of the land of shadows.

Sick at heart and weary, we pressed on and came to our second halt, only to find that there fire and sword had done their work with terrible completeness. The town, left as a heap of crumbling, smoke-grimed, flame-darkened ruins, held not a living thing of any kind within its boundaries, only the dead, those slain in the sack as well as the victims of the fire, lay scattered in the streets in indiscriminate confusion, and so short a time had passed since the work was done, that the birds and beasts of prey had not begun to settle on the scene of carnage.

In mute despair we journeyed on again, this time to the east, directing our course to Eklohn, our last and only hope. If that were in the hands of the rebels, or destroyed, we were indeed in pitiable plight. It gave us courage, however, to find that the Nubians had been here so short a time ago. It argued that they had not yet, in their devastating march, reached Eklohn. This belief was greatly strengthened, too, when instead of being undisturbed as before, those black, savage hordes showed themselves, harassing our daily journeys, upsetting our nightly encampments, making dashes across our slowly-moving van, hanging about our rear, slaying all stragglers, and guarded by the thick, dank, undergrowth, picking off men from our flanks, thus exhausting our patience, wearing out our strength, diminishing our number.

In the rear, where I was placed, however, the enemy grew cautious and practised more discretion than otherwhere, for they learnt to fear the leaden bullets that flew, death-laden, from my ever-ready sling. Day after day I increased in skill in the use of it, sharpened into quickness by constant direful need; and a foeman had only to show himself amid the foliage of the forest for an unerring missile to find its mark in him.

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF POST-CARD COMPETITION.—No. 14.

Mr. T. H. Doherty, of 46, Wellesley Street, Hockley, Birmingham, wins the provincial guinea this week, and Mr. A. Welch, 3, Duke's Court, Bow Street, Covent Garden, W.C., the London. The words transposed were *criminal* (col. 2, l. 19) and *telephone* (col. 2, l. 66); page 444.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

It was the day on which the final selections were to be made for the last few *rôles* still vacant in the caste of the new piece shortly to be produced at the Academy Theatre.

Perhaps, there were few busier men in London than Bateman Wallis, the manager. This, his third production in the Metropolis, was to transcend anything yet attempted. His long experience in America, both as actor and manager, had stood him in good stead, and he rather opened the eyes of some old-fashioned people with his go-ahead, transatlantic notions.

Long, thin, and wiry of body, lean and almost haggard of countenance, he had two eyes, peering out from beneath penthouse brows with a look of almost defiant energy.

But this afternoon he was tired. The constant examination of applicants for even the one or two unimportant vacancies had bored him even more than usual. Only theatrical managers can know to the full what a repugnance the second-rate actor or actress has to telling the truth about his or her capabilities without sundries of ornament and embellishment difficult to detach from the slight foundation.

But now there was a lull. The stream of budding aspirants and battered old pros. had ceased, and resting his head on his hand, he stared vacantly at the opposite wall. How dreary it all was! What a grotesque mockery of life it seemed to him whenever he had time to think! The lines about his firm, rather scornful mouth deepened as he reflected, then suddenly resumed their usually immobile, impassive appearance as he called "Come in!" to someone who had knocked hesitatingly at the door.

A lady about forty-five, desperately attempting to look younger, dressed in a pitifully cheap imitation of the newest fashion, with a slight simper—half nervous, half impudent—entered and advanced towards the table.

The manager indicated by a slight wave of his hand a chair, which was so placed that the light from the window behind him should fall upon the face of whoever sat upon it. The lady after seating herself, began:

"Mr. Wallis, you may have heard of me; my name is De Burgh—Miss Marie De Burgh. I play either juvenile or heavy lead, but having been some time out of an engagement, and having heard from my agent that you were in want of someone to play a character old woman, I thought I would go out of my line for once in a way. I hope you have not settled."

The manager, who had given a slight start when the lady entered, having recovered his self-possession, said in cold, business tones:

"No; I have not settled."

"Oh, I am so glad," the voluble lady resumed. "I can give you the best of references. I have played in all the principal theatres, and have been leading lady to——"

Here she rattled off a list of her experiences, engagements, and accomplishments, much as an auctioneer would expatiate on the points of some animal that he had a special interest in getting a good price for.

The manager listened with the same bored air until she had at last run herself out of breath. Then, without lifting his head, he said slowly and distinctly, as if he wished each word to have due emphasis and effect:

"I don't think you will do."

The lady started as if petrified with astonishment, and waited in silence, as if to give Mr. Wallis time to explain this extraordinary announcement. Upon his not taking advantage of this opportunity, she began again:

"I will come to you for a very small salary, and"—here her voice, which before had been pitched in a high, strident key, slightly trembled—"I do need the engagement, as I am on the brink of starvation."

"Madam," Mr. Wallis said, as coldly as before, "I run my show on strictly business principles. The homely pathetic element is only of use on the stage when the curtain is up. I have the honour to wish you good-evening."

Something in the tones of his voice seemed to awaken some old memory in the mind of Miss De Burgh. She leant forward, and gazed upon his countenance intently for a moment or two, then ejaculated, with a short, quick gasp of astonishment:

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"Horace Freeman."

"Well, what then?"

"You are so changed, Horace."

"Am I?" Then, wearily: "I suppose I am."

"Oh, Horace, surely for the sake of the old days you will give me something to do? I may not have used you well then, but for the love you once had for me forget and forgive the past."

"The love I once had for you! Do you imagine I like to think about that? Have you no shame left in you that you appeal to me on that score? Have you forgotten what you once did to me? Looking at you now where you sit, with all the traces of the horrible life you have led marked on your face—your selfish, cruel, ay, dissolute face—I can almost be thankful that you allowed me to see as soon as you did the kind of creature I had loved. But incidentally you killed all my faith in womanhood, and have made me what I am—a prosperous theatrical manager. I hope you don't expect me to feel grateful to you for that."

The hard, dry tones of weary cynicism with which the last words were uttered sounded in her ears like the knell of her newly awakened hopes. She rose as if to go, then, turning to him with a gesture of despair, she wailed:

"Horace, you are rich, they say. I am, God knows, how poor! If you can't engage me, give me a little money to buy some food. I am literally starving."

"Food?" he sarcastically queried, "I should think by the aroma which has pervaded this room since you did me the honour to enter it, that you can hardly be in need of the necessaries of life. You seem to be able at least to purchase such luxuries as *patchouli* and whisky."

"Mr. Freeman!"

"Wallis, if you please. Horace Freeman is dead to you—and to me."

"Well, Mr. Wallis, if you cannot assist me, you might at least refrain from insulting me."

Mr. Wallis rose from his seat, and, quietly walking to the door, closed it gently. Then, turning to the now angry woman, he seized her wrists, and forced her to her chair. Then, gazing on her, not sternly, but gravely and sadly, he began, in a voice monotonous and hollow, to speak to her.

"Years ago, madam, in the city of Glasgow, there was a young journalist—not brilliant, perhaps, nor particularly promising, but a hard worker, and one who loved his work, and found his pleasure in it. He was slowly rising in his profession, and was sure at least of a comfortable living for himself and his aged mother. One of his duties was to attend the theatres and report on the performances. This work he did carefully, criticising fairly and dispassionately each performance and the impersonation of each performer.

"One night, in the course of his ordinary duty, he went to one of the theatres—no matter which. He watched the play, and calmly took his notes until the end of the third act. With the beginning of the fourth act a strange thing happened. One came on the stage, singing as she came—a young girl she was, with large blue eyes and smiling lips. How like an angel she seemed! Oh, heavens, how like an angel!

"Well, contentment knew that young man no more. He loved her at first sight, and for the first time he ever had loved woman. He got introduced to her after the performance, saw her to her home, and thus began an intimacy which resulted in his marriage with her some weeks later in another town.

"As the husband of an actress who refused to leave the stage, he threw up his position on the paper he was working for, and became, like her, a strolling player.

"His mother having old-fashioned ideas, it broke her heart. He heard of his poor mother's death when he and the company were in the South of England. Being poor and struggling, he could not even attend the funeral. She was buried by strangers at the cost of strangers. Her son's wife having extravagant notions, it was left to others to defray the funeral expenses.

"Sit still, and hear me out, woman! There's worse to come, though, God knows, that was hard to bear.

"All else had gone well, so far. That young man had worked, studied hard, was always perfect in his parts and, loving his gay, frivolous wife, denied himself even the properties necessary to his profession, in order that she might be better dressed than the other ladies of the company. What did he care for a bit of self-sacrifice so long as she loved him? All was heaven to him if she smiled, hell if she frowned on him. For her sake he would have undergone any privations, suffered any pain.

"But her vanity was boundless. He began to notice rings upon her fingers more costly than he could have bought, diamonds in her ears worth more than their joint salaries for six months. He asked for explanations, and received such as he was glad to make himself try to believe.

"One night she left the theatre before his part was finished, and when he went home to their lodgings she was not there. He waited, thinking she had gone to spend some time in their rooms. He waited wearily alone. He was oppressed with the memory of his dead mother and the jealous misery of his own too loving heart. She never returned.

"In the morning he was told that he had been deceived all along and that people thought he knew. That man was Horace Freeman, that woman was you!

"I will not tell you of my sufferings—of my madness, of my subsequent wanderings to and fro in a vain effort to forget the past. You, shallow-hearted as you are, could not understand. Now, go!"

The woman, who had been forced to listen to all he had to say, every word cutting her like the lash of a whip, every tone and inflection of his well-remembered voice searing her very soul, sobbing and weeping, holding her hands over her head, as if to ward off a blow—desolate, stricken with the hopeless misery of those who feel outcast and lost for ever, rose to her feet and crept towards the door.

Once there, she turned to him with a world of dumb supplication in her eyes. Silently they gazed on one another's faces—he, the hard, cynical man of the world; she, the poor, battered remains of a once beautiful woman. Again she turned towards the door.

"Stop," he said; "give me your address."

She gave it tremblingly, yet with a thrill of hope in her voice; then, slowly, in obedience to a wave of his hand, she opened the door, and went with tottering footsteps out into the world.

The manager sighed—one heavy, deep-drawn sigh—walked to his desk, and sitting down, he wrote an order on his bankers for a certain sum to be sent to that address each week.

A. S. Walters.

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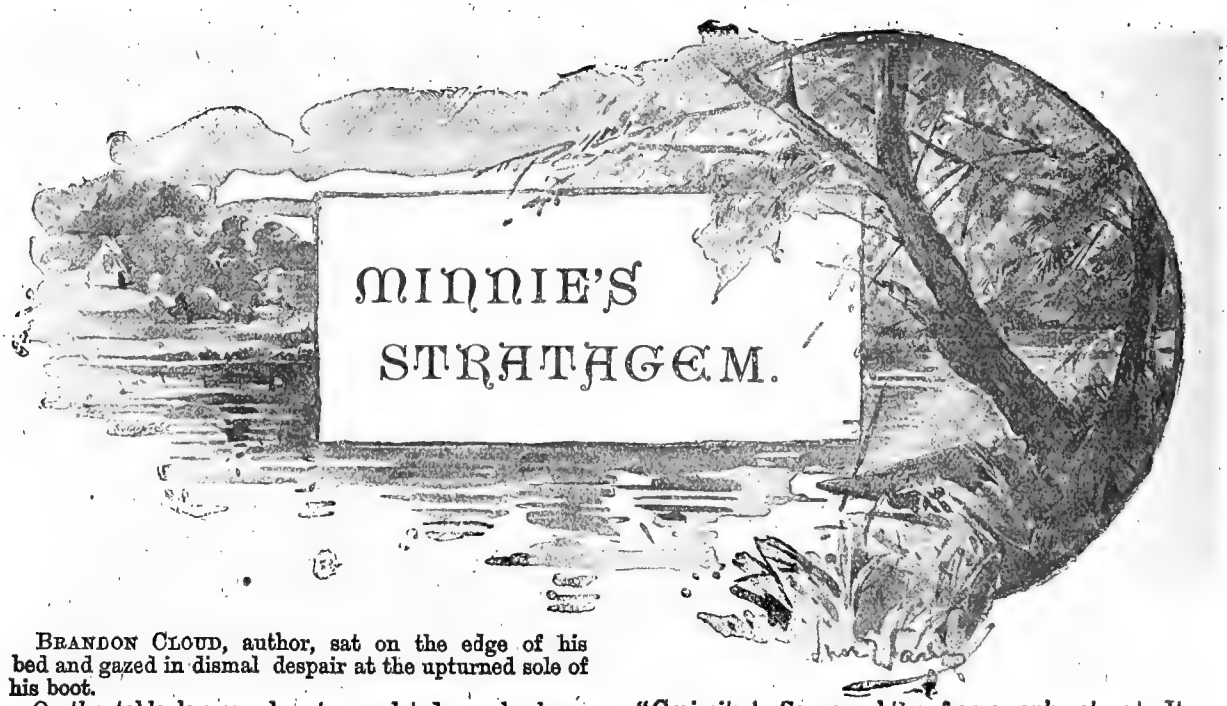

Brandon Cloud, author, sat on the edge of his bed and gazed in dismal despair at the upturned sole of his boot.

On the table lay an almost completed novel, whose progress had received a dual check. Firstly, the supply of paper had become exhausted, which, secondly, allowed the author time to think of the woman he loved; and this always made him feel so utterly miserable that he could not bring his thoughts to bear upon anything but the apparent hopelessness of the state of man.

"Well, Brandon, my boy," he mused bitterly, "you've reached the end at last. Assets, fivepence; liabilities, an empty stomach and a landlady's bill for £10."

He had thought of suicide before, but he was young and clung to life, bad as it was, living more in hope than substance.

The only other alternative was starvation, and this he considered worse still. He could not have laboured manually if he had got work to do, for having been born in the purple he had always counted poverty out of his life, so had learned no trade. He dropped into his chair again and picked up the manuscript of his novel. How beautifully smooth it read; what a grand plot it was, and what a character was the poor, struggling, ambition-loving journalist—"A *Fin-de-Siècle* Fool." Ah! If he could but finish it. No more starvation, no more lying to widow landladies, no more dreaming of the woman he loved but would not marry.

While he sat thinking of what might be there came a knock at the door, so timid that he did not notice it until it was repeated thrice.

"The landlady," he thought, without rising.

However, it was not the portly form of the widow that met Brandon's gaze when the door opened, but a sweet little vision of a girl enwrapped in sables. He started to his feet with an exclamation as she came into the room, the smile on her face lighting up the apartment like a ray of summer sunshine.

"My dear Minnie," he cried, as he offered her a chair and relieved her of her muff and boa, "what in the world induced you to come here?"

"Curiosity and—and love; but——"

"Curiosity! Seven-eighths of a woman's nature! It has ruined many a woman and——"

"Now it's going to save a man," she interposed with a smile, which died from her eyes as she glanced round the room. "You don't appear to be very comfortable; and no fire. You said in your letter you were making your fortune. That is not true."

Brandon was seated on the edge of the table looking at nothing in particular.

"Perfectly," he answered, shifting uneasily. "Only, you know, it's slow work; there are so many at the game, and I never was clever."

"You have grown pessimistic. Poor Brandon!" and she caught his hands. "How cold you are! Why don't you have a fire?"

The author did not answer.

"Oh, I understand," she said in a sympathetic voice. "No wood, no coals, no money, eh?" and she caressed his hand fondly. "You have not made much progress on the royal road?"

"Don't you understand, Minnie, I have endeavoured to earn my own living honestly, endeavoured to be independent of any man, and I want to continue so? There are enough parasites in the world. It has been a bit of a struggle, I'll admit, but I have grown accustomed to it."

"Brandon," was Minnie's solemn response, "I want to show you the folly of your independence. Did you think I could not read between the lines of your letter to me? A man who is making his fortune, or is earning a living and has hopes for the future, does not implore the woman he loves to forget him and marry some other man. Brandon, you do love me?" She placed her hands upon his shoulders and looked up into his face.

He shut his eyes for a moment, his lips quivered, and he did not speak, but he smoothed her fair hair softly.

"Then you will come away with me?" she pleaded. "You will sink your foolish spirit of pride and indepen-

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dence and make me a happy woman?" and she nestled her head on his arm. "Not long ago, when you were rich, you loved me and we were to be married; but when you lost your all in those wretched companies you would not be my husband, though my fortune is ample for both."

"I wish I could swallow my wretched pride, but I cannot. I could not live on your money, in your house. My inmost feelings would cry shame on me; my position would be unbearable."

Minnie shivered.

"You are cold?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Well, you had better be going," and he handed her her furs. "It is so kind and good of you, Minnie, but—but I'll try a little longer for that fortune," and the ghost of a smile lingered on his face for an instant.

"I suppose I could not help you in any way, Brandon? May I leave my cheque-book?"

The question was put very hesitatingly, and while the inner man cried, "Yes," in piteous accents, the outer gentleman declined the kind offer with a courteous firmness.

"I have read several of your short stories," Minnie said, as she pulled on her gloves, "and I think they are really clever. But you ought to try something big—a three-volume novel."

"They are going out of fashion, and, besides, they take such a time. One can scribble off short stories like nursery rhymes, and the return is quick."

He referred to the return of manuscripts; she thought he meant payment.

"But here," he went on rapidly, going to the table and taking up his unfinished book, "here is a novel I have almost completed. None of your ordinary drivel, but realism, and that is the demand of the hour. It will not be more than 40,000 words, and I am confident of its success."

"When you finish your book, Brandon," she advised, "send it to Irvine and Irvine. They will publish it in their 'Nom-de-plume' series. You will have an eccentric, idiotic poster all to yourself in the new art style and the puzzle of the hour will be: 'What is the writer's name? Is it a he or a she?' Then, when the papers have criticised your book, praised it, slashed it and discussed it for all it is worth, your real name will be discovered; interviewers will regard you as a special prize, and you will be famous."

Her throat burnt as she spoke, her voice was very dry, and her *bonhomie* artificial.

"Good-bye, good-bye!"

"Kiss me, Brandon; a last kiss."

He bent and pressed his lips to hers, then turned quickly away as she hurried downstairs and home, and sat in his chair far into the evening, the most miserable man on earth.

It was about a week later, and Brandon was still in his lodgings. His landlady had informed him after Minnie's visit that someone had settled a long-standing debt, so he need not worry over his little account. He blessed her; she passed the blessing on to Minnie Horton.

He sat at the table endeavouring to think out his novel, but he could not compose a single sentence, for on the newspaper spread out before him there danced in the blackest of type a paragraph which had paralysed all the energy in him. Minnie was to be married! She had taken him at his word, and would marry Percy Olcott in three months' time.

Well, that ended it. The one ray of hope that had made his existence bearable had been flashed from his life, and death was the only panacea. Poisoning, hanging, drowning or a bullet—anything to get out of the world quickly. And he had loved her so much! Of course, it was his own choice; if he could only have conventionally murdered his pride and laughed in the world's face he might have been happy with the woman he loved, but he could not, and now he could not live.

Thus ran his reflections, when the landlady brought him a letter, written on perfumed yellow paper. He recognised the handwriting at once. It was from Minnie, and confirmed the newspaper item. She retained his ring as a keepsake.

"Do not give way to ridiculous passion," she advised him, and his face hardened as he read the words again. Not he! Why should he? Must his life be suddenly extinguished, his hopes dispelled, because he had lost the love of one woman? There were scores of others—all beautiful, all loving, all good—no, some good; and when he was famous! He had struck the right chord, and his whole being sprang into a furious blaze of ambition—a desire to cheat the woman who he thought had jilted him, and laugh at her in mockery and triumph.

He walked his room feverishly, his hands clenched and his lips set tight, while the fire of ambition forged his determination and withered his love. By heavens, he would be famous! Night after night he would toil at that book until it was finished, and then—then his triumph?

Yes, that was it; work, and forget her; and he pitched the dainty note into the fire and commenced. He unfroze; all his energies returned, all his thoughts rushed back upon him and fell over each other as his pen raced across the paper. In a few days his book was ready for the publishers.

Brandon received a reply from Irvine and Irvine within two days. This was a revelation that astounded him. But what surprised him still more was the fact that the publishers wanted to see him.

"It was a pity Minnie had been so hasty," Brandon thought, as he consumed Irvine's note, time after time. Fortune and fame were written all over him; and if he only had her!

At least, he ought to write and congratulate her on her engagement. He wondered with a mean exultation what she would feel like; if she would turn white when she read of his success. So he sat down to write, but, remembering that all eggs did not turn out chicks, he deferred it until he had seen the publishers.

After the interview he was mad with himself because he had not written, for Irvine and Irvine paid him £250 down for the rights of his book. How he walked home from the office he never knew, and he wondered why he had not cabbed it. He remembered changing the cheque at the bank, buying a cigar, which he enjoyed with great gusto, and visiting his tailor's, where he purchased a ready-made suit and was measured for various others. Of course he would have to change his lodgings, now. He would not entertain interviewers in his present garret.

Arrived home, he desired to wipe off his debts with the landlady at once, showering carelessly upon the table in her best parlour a handful of gold, which took all the breath from the old lady's body. She was in no hurry, however. There was a visitor upstairs waiting for him.

"A man!" gasped Brandon, with a sinking heart as

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his mind flew to interviewers. But it was a lady, as he quickly discovered, and that lady, Minnie. His heart beat rapidly, his breath came quickly, his eyes gleamed brightly, and he was about to catch her in his arms when he remembered that she belonged to another, and the memory crushed him.

He attempted to speak, but a sudden attack of nervousness stilled his tongue, and he sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands, while the lump that had risen in his throat almost choked him.

"Aren't you well, Brandon?" Minnie inquired, alarmed at his appearance. She placed her small hand lovingly upon his burning forehead, but he winced at the touch as though it was something that hurt him. "Are you ill, dear?" and she sank on her knees and strove to pull his hands from his face.

"It was only a joke, darling, only a joke," she cried piteously, her eyes wet with tears. "I am not going to marry Olcott."

Brandon sat upright suddenly, his face very white.

"You are not?" as he caught her wrists in a frantic grasp.

"No, no! Forgive me, dearest. I thought if I told you that, you would fancy I was happy, and so be able to work. You said so."

Brandon sighed deeply, bent and kissed her.

"I might have killed myself," he remarked presently.

"You had too much pride." She was smiling now.

"But why have you come here again?"

"You never wrote to me, Brandon, and I thought I——"

"You feared I should do what you knew I would not. That's like a woman!" and he laughed lightly. "But it's all over now, Minnie. I have completed my book and sold it to the Irvines for £250. The announcement of your engagement kicked my pride so hard that I had to do something desperate."

Minnie was a splendid actress.

"What?" craning forward, with one hand on her lover's shoulder: "£250! You darling!" and she kissed him eagerly.

"Yes, and there's more to follow. They are certain it will be a success, and they claim the refusal of all my other works. God bless you, Minnie. But for you—you've got to share this with me!"

He threw the gold and notes upon the table, but the girl shrank back.

"No, no, Brandon, your brains earned it; it is all yours. Yes! We will share it, and all that is to come. No refusal; you proposed it."

They were married within a month, but "A *Fin-de-Siècle* Fool" was not a success. Indeed, it was an utter failure; and one paper remarked that Messrs. Irvine and Irvine had better close up if that was the best rubbish they could secure.

How Minnie laughed at the great unknown scribe who penned these lines! Like Brandon, he never knew that Minnie Horton was the real publisher of the volume; that she paid Brandon the £250, and that she published all his following effusions.

Brandon works merrily on; writes four hours each day, and sells each book as soon as it is finished. Strange to relate, many of his works are out of print. Though paid for, they have never been published. Occasionally he determines to trot round to Irvine's and inquire what they mean by such scandalous conduct; but when this fit seizes him, Minnie always has something for him to do, and he always does it.

AGNES JEWLY.

The Family Honour.

At seven o'clock on a September morning, dressed in white, with a broad-brimmed Panama hat, and wearing slippers, M. Roumegas went down into his garden to water his jacinths. He evidently considered it a great operation, and gave to it the earnest attention of a man who has little else to do, and of an old man who has done a great deal. He had retired from business with a large fortune made by his activity, his intelligence, and especially his probity. Probity! Behold the great strength of Roumegas, the cause of his success. What a fine reputation was this. Pure as crystal, and brilliant as the sun. In the street, hats were lifted like the wings of swallows. One felt near him an atmosphere of calm and well-earned repose. It was an honest, a great man, who passed, when M. Roumegas walked by. Such a life merits a recompense, but heaven had been unjust towards the just, and had not spared trouble. His wife was dead. His only child, Antoine, was thirty years old—dissipated and completely worthless. In the town he was named only with a smile and a shrug. When the tall, blonde, handsome fellow, elegantly dressed, but dull-eyed and stupid, was met in the street, people hesitated about speaking to him, but they thought of his father and bowed. The poor old father suffered deeply. All his ambitious dreams of his son had proved vain. "What was the good of working? The governor was rich, and was not eternal. Let us amuse ourselves," said the young man. Neither reasoning nor threats availed. Wounded in his hope, his pride, his love, how quickly poor Roumegas aged.

A hesitating step on the gravel path made M. Roumegas turn. Antoine was before him—very pale, with soiled linen, disordered hair, and red eyes.

M. Roumegas put down the watering pot, adjusted his glasses, and in a tone half-vexed and half-indulgent asked:

"What is it?"

Antoine appeared to try to gather courage and stammered in a low voice. "Last night at play——"

"You lost—lost again! Ah, misery of my life. He will kill me, that boy! You had sworn to me. By heavens, there is only one thing to do. Pay, pay again and always to the last coin! There is the Roumegas honour! Come, how much?"

Antoine remained silent.

"It is not that."

"What is it, then? A quarrel? You have been

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insulted? You fought? Ah, those gambling-rooms? What was done? They drank, they fought, they disputed, they played, they——"

A terrible thought crossed the old man's mind. He anxiously reached both hands towards his son in a beseeching gesture.

"Oh, not that—it is not that!"—Antoine hung his head—Great heaven, it was true? His son—his son a cheat, a thief! The poor man tottered as if about to fall.

"Father!" said Antoine, advancing to support him.

"Don't touch me. Don't touch me!" cried the old man, recovering himself with wonderful energy. Pointing towards the house he said: "Go to your room."

"Father," cried the young man. "Let me explain. I am not so bad as you think. I have been led away."

"Go to your room," repeated the inflexible Roumegas.

Hanging his head, and drooping like a criminal, the son entered the house and went up the stairs. Behind, head erect, eyes brilliant, with jerky gait, the father followed. They reached the chamber, with two windows on the street, disordered, odd books thrown here and there, guns, swords and pistols on the walls, and pipes, pots of tobacco and cigarettes everywhere.

The young man sat down heavily on his untouched bed, and with downcast eyes crumpled with feverish fingers a hanging corner of the curtain, as he answered in a broken voice:

"The last time, when I asked you for money, I promised you I would not play any more. I did not have the strength, I began again. I lost again. I did not dare to come to you a second time. I kept losing all the time—lost everything. Then someone proposed to me that I should associate with him to play together. We lost again—always. This person advised me. I was weak. A madness, father, a madness! Pardon me!" He half rose and extended his arms towards his father.

"Go on," said Roumegas, erect before him with folded arms.

Antoine continued: "Last night they suspected—and we were arrested—excepting me! I have not been taken yet; they don't know about me, you understand? And if Baptistin does not tell——"

"Baptistin! that Jewish boy—your accomplice—a servant! Great God! but you have fallen!"

"They don't know anything yet, I tell you. Many gamblers of the party are suspected with me. Baptistin is the only one arrested—if he keeps still!"

"And you will let them suspect innocent men! To preserve the little honour that remains to you, you would brand the honour of others! Do you know that is infamous, simply infamous?"

"Father, pardon! pardon! I promise you—I swear to you that in future——"

"In future! Is there any future for you?"

There was the sound of steps along the quiet street; they stopped at the door of the house; the bell rang. Antoine sprang up and listened breathlessly.

The young man rushed to the window.

"Baptistin has told!" he said faintly, turning frightfully pale.

M. Roumegas looked out. The police were at the door. He let the curtain fall, walked the length of the large room, took a revolver from the wall, assured himself that it was loaded, and held it out towards his son, who watched him as if stupefied.

"Come!" said he.

Antoine did not take the pistol. He fixed upon his father wide-open eyes, with no comprehension in them. Below the street door had been opened. The servants and the police were talking. The sound of their voices came up to the room.

"You have lost your honour; at least save ours!" said M. Roumegas. "Come, come!"

The talking below had ceased. Steps resounded on the old stone stairs, large and sonorous like a chapel. They reached the chamber.

"Coward!" murmured Roumegas; "coward to the very end."

He quickly turned the pistol, aimed at his son, and fired.

Antoine fell across his bed with the top of his head blown off.

There was a knocking at the door. M. Roumegas put the still smoking pistol in his son's right hand, opened the door, and pointing to the bleeding corpse, said:

"Too late, gentlemen! He has taken the law into his own hands."

LE VIER.

RESULT OF JUMBLED STORY COMPETITION.

No. 13.

THE prize of £5 goes this week to Mr. M. Campbell, 43, Brook Street Kennington, S.E.; and to the remaining £5 we have added 10s., and divided the total among the eleven competitors mentioned below, whose attempts contained only one mistake: J. N. Cowle, 43, Portland Road, Devonport; Miss D. Warton, 19, Agamemnon Road, West Hampstead; Miss Butt, 32, Kensington Court Mansions, W.; A. Richards, 66, Dalston Lane, Kingsland, N.E.; F. Martyn, "Roseville," Polsham Road, Paignton, South Devon; Miss E. E. Smith, 67, Brockley Road, London, S.E.; J. Richardson, 40, Palm Street, Longsight, Manchester; Miss K. Edmonds, 32, Manor Place, Hackney, N.E.; C. T. Christopherson, 38, Wakehurst Road, Wandsworth Common; J. T. Hutchinson, 14, Longley Road, Tooting Graveney; Mrs. A. Jones, 67, Lewes Road, Brighton.

Jumbled Story Competition.

No. 16.

ON pages 506-7 appears a story, each line of which is numbered. The lines are all in their wrong position, and the prizes mentioned below are offered to those who write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in the order most nearly correct. The title is jumbled up, and should be correctly given *and pasted on the paper containing the effort.*

The conditions are jumbled in the following paragraph as an example. The correct order of the lines is given in line 10.

1 SHORT STORIES on or before *Monday,*
2 awarded to the readers whose solutions first
3 *JUMBLED STORY.*
4 Four Prizes—one of £5 and three of £1 each—are
5 *October 19th,* and envelopes must be marked
6 correct. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be
7 reach this office.
8 All attempts to be delivered at the offices of
9 offered to the readers whose keys are most nearly
10 4—9—6—2—7—8—1—5—3—12—11—13—10.
11 a sheet of paper the figures in the order they
12 Competitors in doing the story should write on
13 believe to be correct, thus:

£2 is offered to the first of the readers living in Ireland who succeeds in forwarding the correct, or most nearly correct, solution.

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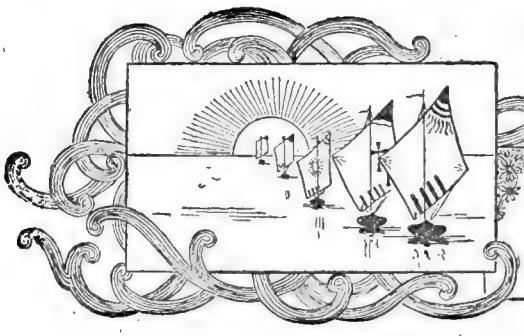
JUMBLED STORY No. 16.



DUHTEEL.

F. Almbert the French of Belpitre

"One morning I left the barracks in company with the conscripts, who came to us in batches together, and my old comrade promised to look me to fight him.'

"He did not speak for a few moments, and I rose with an officer of another regiment, a friend of mine. I had no doubt that I should be able to carry out the artist, you know. And you?' I asked in my college of St. Cyr.

My companion was now Captain Hammer, and when a couple of soldiers, who had seen his sudden serious breach of honour by insulting a woman, during the chief's absence on leave. We were busy of it because, thanks to the Minister of War, the conversation be forgotten, please. But these things last.

The way in which he replied to my greeting was no difference at all. For the present he is simply a private soldier?

"In a second I realised how shameful my words turned into the buffet at the station.

"'It was stupid of you,' I said with a smile; 'she unhappily she preferred someone else.'

"We selected a table and sat down; behind us pass the army is coming to, *mon Dieu!* when a opening I saw several soldiers and conscripts.

We sat down side by side, and told one another commanding the district, and I told him every plan.

He looked much older than when I had last seen him and turned to leave the room.

I turned and walked with him, but I soon gave up the point.

We found an empty seat somewhat removed from someone hummed the refrain of a popular song, as Mme. de Férisset; she was accompanied by a young boy!"

He flicked the ash from his cigar and continued:

I said nothing; words are useless sometimes.

"Since I last saw you, that evening at Besançon I feel like a murderer.

"The words had hardly left my lips when a slight young soldier standing in the doorway; he was very suspicions. I was also firmly resolved that on no other day that I imagined myself in love with her. We were going to Lille for the day, and as we had our experiences during the years that had passed expostulated with him.

"Of course, I know that the poor boy really broke ground for a couple of paces and I followed him, his face was pale and drawn, and grey hairs upon my shoulder, and I turned and saw that it was well worth a declaration, and her husband, they can see you now with your pale face and great eyes sometimes end in courts-martial, and I warn you that you are in love?"

"I burst out laughing. 'To think that she has a friendship the very day you first came to school. I gave a large dinner party and reception. I was chosen, and I had decided that I would allow my turn.

"'Have you anyone among your conscripts whose field-officer talks of giving a common soldier to know, he is Georges de Férisset.'

"Yes," he said wearily.

"My regiment is quartered at Manbenge, and last arranged that the meeting should take place at Saint-Barbe. You recollect we struck up a breach of discipline.'

"I cannot get rid of the thought that I have committed suicide. I could not possibly have saved her "Mother."

"'I really cannot say,' I answered; 'the only newspapers have not been allowed to mention it."

"You do not recognise me?" he said, smiling.

He hesitated, and I did not press my question.

I was silent, and horror-struck at the sudden and preoccupied, evidently suffering mentally.

"You are worried by something?" I asked at morning dress.

"'I raised my hand to strike you,' he said, 'and, so unlike his old, cheery manner that I glanced at him, his action was so unexpected. And I know I have taken part in a tragedy. You have not heard my plan without arousing M. de Férisset's Minister?'

Several months passed, and I had heard nothing that I should have allowed myself to take away all idea of making conversation, for he was *distrait* my friend continued:

"Let us sit down and I will tell you what is private and nothing else.'

"Money or business, I suppose, or is it possible claims of honour, and, knowing my skill with foils, therefore dangerous, and I saw that it would not last.

"Before I could guess what was about to happen he was lucky in attaining such high rank so early that you will not find me a lenient judge if I have names, at least, coupled with hers.'

"'I, too, have only one whose name you are likely troubling me. Perhaps you will be able to advise June I was the senior officer and was in command unexpectedly.

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"We reached the place fixed upon at the same movement and had followed him, seized him by the head.

"He made no resistance, but his eyes fixed on my shoulders.

Last year I went down to Besançon to attend the Mad! How can you fight such a fellow? A pretty fellow I know anything of is young Myrian, son of soldier was in uniform, and one of my seconds name I know, I wonder?' my friend asked.

"'Son of the "beautiful Mme. de Férisset"?'

"No, I cannot say that I do, although you remind and I cannot refuse reparation to her son.'

We continued our walk, and at last he said:

"'She is a charming woman,' my companion and begged for an interview with the general to take official cognisance of your acts.'

"We must have presented a curious sight as we duel on Belgian soil,' I said. 'I have committed a months' time, and I congratulated him warmly, for he had received his promotion, when one evening, that nothing would have induced me to wound, him with anxiety.

"One short convulsion and all was over. He said; 'I never have been able to decide why I did committed a dreadful crime; that I am morally quietly, and I signed to my companion not to press to take my leave.

"'It would be worse than useless.'

"'Yes; the same.'

"How could I so far forget my rank as to allow close to me, raising his hand as though to strike me, I wondered, I wonder still, whether her son sacrificed obvious reasons chosen civilians for the post—the crowd of passers-by.

"I am Gustave Hammer, your old schoolfellow at Férisset, holding his weapon in his left hand, made him, our blades still crossing, the points level with me a military salute.

"My seconds and I arrived at F—— at the left. I have insulted this man, and I shall have his life because he knew the truth at last; because permission,' I asked, 'will you telegraph to the man whose vices and follies had lately became a say, is very *complaisant*. I have heard a dozen confidently expected to obtain his majority in a few curious look come into his eyes. Suddenly he fell.

A carriage passed—I do not think that Gustave passing us on their homeward way; here and there gloomy and cold, with a light rain steadily bowing, turned to the young man.

"'It was in uniform that I was insulted,' he said since my friend had left school to enter the military noise made me turn round. I saw the figure of a son in the army already. Why, it seems only the refreshment-room; it was ajar, and through the appointed time. It was a miserable morning—as I was walking in the Champs-Elysées, I met him responsible for this young life. Poor boy! poor satisfaction!'

"'If you will not give me the necessary lecture.

"I bowed, and one of my seconds called: '*En garde!*'

"He saluted and left the buffet without a word.

"'And what do you propose to do?' he asked at face as he said: 'She is my mother.'

"The ground was slippery with mud, and full of astonishment at your new surroundings."

"That evening our seconds—each of us had for undergo their month's training.

"Our blades crossed. I did not move, keeping my pale and was trembling violently. He came quite down.

"Our seconds placed us face to face, and M. de F——, a little village just across the frontier, a marriage of a friend. The ceremony was a brilliant *denoûement* of my friend's story. It was growing this woman's reputation in a public place?

"'There is no express prohibition——'

"'Well, well,' he said, holding out his hand, 'you belonged to a cavalry officer.

"'Yes, General, if you put it in that light.'

"'Don't interrupt me, sir!' he shouted; 'I don't account would I hurt so much is a hair of his falling.

"'I will not forget, sir,' I replied, as I saluted her.'

"'You would, then, desert?'

"'Of course not; such a possibility was never showed just above his temples.

"'You must be mad to dream of such a thing. Oh! it was a serious business, I assure you, but looking for my seat at table when a hand was laid as a soldier, it is my duty to apologise for such a adversary to touch me with the point of his weapon. I have no knowledge of this affair; let our couple of days later; swords were the weapons not declare my passion, for I, too, was in love with some time to spare before the train started, we saw it—and in one of the occupants I recognised was dead!"

"'It seems to me, sir, there is only one course penetrated his breast. I shall never, if I live to faced one another. A young man in the uniform was the door leading into the second-class dreamt of.'

"'Then we must cross the frontier and fight our much less to kill, him willingly, but, nevertheless, byword. They were laughing and talking gaily. Only a scratch, of course, but it would satisfy the care what the man's position is in society, it makes time as my adversary and his friends. The young he preferred death to the living shame of calling me."

"I did not reply to this, and presently he cooled the throat.

"'Let him go,' I said to the soldiers; and then, in his career. We spent most of the evening of a private of *chasseurs* and a man in ordinary eyes fixed on the young man's face, and I noticed a thing.

"'I am at your disposal; you know where I am up when he next came to Paris.

"When we arrived at Lille I went to headquarters myself to be mixed up in such an affair with a me of someone, I cannot tell whom."

"He was very angry, and gave me a severe of him save that I saw in the *Journal Officiel* that he had leapt upon the point of my rapier, which must go your own way. Remember, however, that were. What could have possessed me that morning one, and on the evening of the wedding-day my host be a hundred, forget the smile upon his face as he late; the audiences of the cafés-concerts were be so easy as I had anticipated to carry out my to be found.'

G. W. Household.

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THE ACCIDENT ON THE GRINDEWALD.

Key to Jumbled Story No 13.

56 Monsieur Salvator Martigny, painter, sculptor,
108 artist, sat alone in his salon.
5 He was waiting for his wife.
3 On his face was the pleased expression of one
57 who has done something magnanimous. He seemed
2 happy, but somewhat anxious.
43 Occasionally he put out his hand, and opened a
64 casket containing a superb tiara of diamonds.
59 "I trust," he would say, "that madame will find
119 my peace offering acceptable."
100 It was, indeed, to be hoped that madame would
63 do so. She had left his house in the morning in a
10 storm, a whirlwind of words.
65 Now, he was waiting for her return.
61 "She will not be long," he said continually to
69 himself "Ten. Eleven. Twelve. Half-past——"
11 The door opened, and his man came in, bearing a
15 tray in his hand, with a note upon it.
120 It was written in his wife's hand-writing.
90 Monsieur Martigny received it eagerly, and
32 opened it with trembling fingers. There was no
101 date or address.
121 "I left your house this morning for ever. If you
62 hate me, I can find lovers. In future, you may
48 make your own arrangements."
124 Monsieur Martigny read the words many times.
20 His face was very white. He gazed round the room
34 with a despairing look, noting every detail. Each
67 object reminded him of some happy moment he had
50 spent with his wife. Finally, his eyes rested on the
12 casket of jewels that he had prepared as a surprise
75 and a peace-offering.
54 With a groan he slowly crossed the room, and
17 drew a revolver from a cabinet. He placed it
99 against his head.
26 Then he drew the trigger.
27 His hand trembled, and the bullet did not reach
84 his brain.
66 His man, who had but a moment before left the
30 room, after bringing the note, hearing the report of
103 the revolver, rushed in again.
95 He found his master lying unconscious on the
81 floor, while the blood streamed from a horrible
44 wound in the lower part of his face.
49 When, three weeks later, Monsieur Martigny
92 recovered consciousness he renounced his art, his
33 life, everyone that he had ever known, and set out
42 to wander over the face of the earth.
38 Three years later he found himself in Switzerland.
70 One morning he was wandering in the Grindewald,
13 when he encountered a group of peasants who were
47 anxious to enlist as guides. Without pausing to
60 reason, he stepped forward and joined their number.
45 He loved the free life of the mountaineers, the
72 air suited him; above all, it would be something to
122 do. It was an experience, which, he found, he could
68 almost enjoy. He saw many people whom he had
52 known in his old life. No one recognised him; who
91 could have done so in the broken-hearted, grief-
7 laden man, whose mouth, and jaws, and nose
24 were so horribly mutilated?
1 On a bright morning, early in autumn, he was
35 standing on one of the Grindewald roads, waiting
105 for tourists, when a *calèche*, drawn by superb horses,
8 turned at a trot from over the bridge, and came
18 towards him.
16 He recognised immediately one of the occupants
106 as M. Dupois.
79 And madame his wife, at his side?
98 The driver of the *calèche* had slackened his pace
14 to mount the ascent. The guide approached his
96 side, and addressed himself to the gentleman.
104 "Would monsieur like to make an excursion
4 which few tourists know?"
74 "What? An excursion which few tourists know?
77 What say you, little one, shall we trust ourselves to
73 this fellow?"
25 Madame smiled and nodded.
76 Shortly afterwards the three set out together.
86 They climbed the steep mountain sides, the strange
88 guide in front, with bent shoulders, and his head
9 on his breast. Occasionally, he raised his hand to
28 his eyes.
6 A fierce struggle was raging within him. This
51 man and woman, who had robbed him of everything
89 that he loved in life, were in his power.
41 "Mother of God," he cried, "surely you have
53 delivered them into my hands?"
80 They climbed the rocky slopes to the foot of the
112 glacier. On the edge they paused for a moment to
40 rest.
107 "It would be wise, monsieur," said the guide, "if
112 we were now to attach ourselves."
113 He placed his pick against a rock, and taking his
46 rope from his shoulders, he approached Monsieur
31 Dupois, and fastened it securely round him. Then
21 he came to madame, and for a moment, during the
36 operation, his arms encirled her body.
83 He could detect the faint scent that came from
23 her hair. It seemed to stifle him. Ah, how well he
114 knew it.
115 Finally, he fastened the rope round his own
123 waist.
118 "Forward!" he cried, and his voice was firm and
58 steady.
85 Slowly, and carefully, each step planned before-
93 hand, they ascended the glacier. They encountered
22 many dangers; madame's head grew dizzy; and
55 finally she fell almost senseless into the guide's arms.
110 For a moment he gazed silently down on the
82 woman in his arms. Then he shook her roughly.
109 "Wake up," he cried. "The time has come.
116 Listen. I am Salvator Martigny. Do you know
78 me now? I am your husband."
19 His wild laugh echoed down the mountain side.
39 He stopped in the middle, and turned on the
117 frightened man.
97 "You scoundrel," he cried.
102 Then suddenly, drawing the rope in close, and
76 holding his wife to his breast, he sprang into the air.
37 * * * * *
29 Afterwards, three mutilated bodies in a confused
87 mass, tied together by a rope, were found by the
94 peasants at the foot of the abyss.

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By George Manville Fenn.

CHAPTER XXXI.

In the Railway Accident.

Two ghastly white faces, but Lucy's was the whiter, and her eyes were the first to sink before the firm, cold gaze which looked unshrinkingly at hers. The look was clear and crystalline, while that which was directed back flowed with jealous hatred and dislike.

As Lucy's lids fell, and she turned her head slightly to where her aunt sat watching her, waiting for the *dénouement* of this unfortunate meeting, Olive turned her eyes upon her husband, and saw that a couple of red, consumptive-looking spots had appeared in his pale cheeks; and when at last she caught his shrinking gaze she could plainly read how nervous and agitated he seemed. Twice over he shrank from her calm, limpid eyes, misreading the look she directed at him; while, frowning and angry, Emsworth sat back in his corner, glancing from time to time at Murray, trying to silently question him, the first inquiry being, "Whatever shall we do?" the next, "Hadn't we better make them change places with us?" while those which followed succeeded one another so fast that they became confused, and the brain which engendered them was in a whirl.

But the Doctor, after the first quick shock of the encounter, in which was a pang of pity for Olive that she should be called upon to occupy so terribly painful a position, sat calm and unmoved. It was his professional training that had taught him to master every emotion, and, in failing, to mask them, as he did here. His face looked a little hard, but his voice sounded cool and measured as usual when he broke silence:

"Would you like to glance at *Punch*, Lady Braetoun?" he said quietly; and as he leant forward to hand the paper, which was gladly taken, and held as if being skimmed over, he turned to Braetoun to engage him in conversation about the country through which they passed.

"If you care to read," he said, after a time, "I have two of the reviews, with good-sized print."

"Got something here," said Braetoun, in a harsh, petulant way, for he had somewhat recovered his composure after going through a long series of mental calculations regarding the *rencontre*, the result being that he concluded that Lucy had contrived the meeting by bribing the guard.

"Why, she must have followed us down, and been in Brighton, perhaps, ever so long," he argued; "and I've been pushed about in that cursed chair all the time and never known. Poor little lassie! it was very good of her."

He took out the "something" he had mentioned, and began to open and turn the paper.

"Shall I do it, dear?" said Olive quickly; and letting her own paper fall on her lap, she took and opened the sporting journal her husband was battling with rather feebly, and offered it to him with a gentle, appealing smile.

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"Oh, I could have done it," he said petulantly. "I'm not such an invalid as that."

He sank back, holding the paper before him, and Olive resumed her own, while her father shut himself in his corner of the carriage behind the *Times*, Murray calmly leaning back and cutting the leaves of a review.

Aunt Duncan, whose florid face behind her veil was covered with a thick dew, took refuge in a mock sleep, crushing the flowers of her bonnet a good deal as she leant back in her corner, but from time to time she raised one lid as slightly as she could to watch her niece, who sat quivering with her emotion—a mingling of fear, despair, and delight—gazing through the window at the landscape which seemed to sweep round as they dashed on. All the misery and regret at being torn away from Brighton had passed away, and by degrees she yielded more and more to the ever mastering feeling that she was once more side by side with the man she loved, whose garments touched hers from time to time, and the wild, angry glare in her beautiful eyes gradually gave place to a look of swimming tenderness. Olive was almost facing her, fighting hard to ignore her presence; but there was no longer any struggle going on in Lucy's breast. It was no ignoring of the wife's presence, for ten miles of the journey had not been hurried through before Olive did not seem to exist. Roderick Braetoun was with her once more, the only man for whom her heart had ever truly beat, and the feeling was upon her, "Oh, that the journey might be prolonged for hours upon hours, instead of the pace increasing as it did."

Poor Rod! he loved her still, though he had been torn from her, and all present had combined to thrust her away; he must love her, and the pale, handsome woman before her could be nothing to him, or he would not have spoken to her so harshly as he did. He was hers—hers alone, and she sat back waiting, feeling assured that the moment the train dashed into a tunnel and darkness enshrouded them, his hand would seek hers, to hold it with a long, loving pressure, to assure her that he was not changed by his long weary illness. But a minute later she could hardly repress a sigh, for she felt, more than saw, that the carriage was well lighted, and the hope slowly died away.

So quick: hurrying on at such a terrible rate. Only one hour and a quarter, and they would be in town. A sigh rose to Lucy's lips, and she longed intensely to turn and look only once at the pale face so close to hers, but she dared not stir, only sit gazing fixedly out of the window, knowing as she did that at the slightest movement every pair of eyes would be turned upon her.

So swift to her, so slow and agonising to Olive, who sat there glancing from time to time at her husband, as if to assure herself that he was still present, and not slowly gliding away from her once more.

He was reading, or assuming to read, his paper, and she

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could not see his eyes, only his white forehead, already so full of lines. And in those brief glances her heart sank, for it gradually came home to her that in spite of all—her tender affection, her ceaseless efforts to save him from death—now that health and strength were once more well in view, he was stealing away from her into that which was worse to her than death, and her misery seemed greater than she could bear.

There were moments when she was ready to cry mentally: "Why did he not die? It would have been better so." Why had she prayed to Murray to keep on in that nearly ceaseless battle with the grim shadow which hovered over him so long? And the answer came: "Because I was his wife—the one who had vowed to love him, and who would have given her life that he might live."

There was no sign, no look from one to the other, of those who sat facing her, but she knew how beautiful the little figure in the corner was, and how weak her husband. There was no sign, but Olive felt it in her misery-stricken breast, and she sat there gradually growing colder and more rigid, still wearing that stony mask, and holding before her dim eyes the leaves of the comic journal, with its pages dotted with humorous pictures of life.

There were moments—long-drawn, anguished moments—when she felt that she must shriek aloud, or burst into a passionate fit of sobbing; and just as she was suffering most keenly, she gave a violent start, and a painful smile dawned upon her quivering lips, for Braetoun suddenly exclaimed in a petulant way:

"They print these things so atrociously badly. Here, Olive, read this column about the Earlswood Meeting."

Even that was a relief.

"Yes, dear," she said, in what she meant to be a cheerful tone; and she took the paper, as a deep growl came from the corner of the carriage on her right.

"Did you speak, sir?" said Braetoun sharply; and Olive laid her hand upon his knee.

"Eh? speak?" said Emsworth, lowering the paper, of which he had not been able to read a word. "No, I didn't speak," and the broad sheet was raised again.

"Oh: thought you did," said Braetoun contemptuously; and he sank back, while Olive began to read hastily the long—to her—maddening account of the series of races, while, for her part, she did not grasp the import of a sentence.

"Louder, please," said Braetoun sharply; and his wife read on, the tones of her voice, whose tremulous manner sent a thrill of pity and despair through Murray as she struggled on, ever ready to break down and sob, but fighting her brave fight against despair to the very end.

She read on. It was the account now of a hardly-contested race, and her voice grew tinged with the excitement she felt, as it gradually dawned upon her that one of the horses competing was her husband's mare, Bella Donna. But she hardly dared glance at him for fear she should miss a line. She was conscious, though, that he was listening eagerly, with his pale face flushing, and that the subject she was reading had suddenly taken the attention of her father and of Murray, who, though keeping their eyes upon their papers, were listening attentively. Worse still, the occupant of the opposite corner had suddenly changed her position, and, though keeping her face averted, was evidently devouring every word.

Still Olive read on, trembling and eager now herself, lest the news that had so interested her husband should be that of misfortune and disaster. For another horse was the favourite, and Bella Donna was described as being at first far behind.

Had she dared she would have cast down the paper, but as she read Braetoun leant more and more forward, eager for every word. Then a change came over the account, one by one those in front began to drop to the rear, and Olive grew confused by the sporting reporter's technical account till near the end of the race, when the language grew unmistakable, for she read that amidst a tremendous burst of cheering, Bella Donna had won by a head, and the bookmakers were heavily hit.

"Hah!" ejaculated Braetoun, sinking back in his seat and closing his eyes, when Murray dropped his book and leant towards him, while Lucy lost her power over self for a moment and turned, too, with a frightened look in her eyes.

"All right, Doctor, nothing wrong," said Braetoun, a little hoarsely; "man doesn't die of good news."

A quick exchange of glances passed between Olive and Lucy, and then the latter returned to her old position, and sat gazing out with a feeling of elation that made her pulses beat heavily.

"Then you've been running your mare in another race," said Emsworth sharply.

"Well, suppose I have?" said Braetoun resentfully.

"And you've won?"

"Didn't you hear? Aren't you glad?"

"No, I'm not glad," said Emsworth coldly. "I should have thought you had been too ill to think of such things."

"So I have," replied Braetoun, "but I happened to have a good mare, and a good servant who looks after my interests. There," he continued, "we needn't quarrel about a confounded good piece of luck. It will put a couple of thou. in my pocket, and I want it badly enough."

"But can you trust a man to look after such business as that?"

"Seems like it."

"But suppose your horse had lost?"

"So much the worse for me, old man. But I haven't lost. Come, don't make such a fuss about it. My trainer wrote to me and asked if he might enter the mare, for she would have a good chance, and she was only eating her head off in the stable; so I got Olive here to write back, and you see she brought me luck. Hallo! Stopping?"

It was only at the one station—Clapham Junction, and a faint sigh came from the right-hand corner, almost inaudible, but it reached Olive's ears and made them tingle.

Then on once again, another pause, and they were directly after, as it seemed to Lucy, at Victoria.

Emsworth had let down the window, and was looking along the platform for his servant, and the Doctor was gathering together his books; while Olive sat watching her husband, and thrilling with trembling expectancy of she knew not what.

Aunt Duncan seemed to wake up, but she did not speak to her niece, who sat there, upright now, waiting, too, and with her heart beginning to sink with a feeling of misery which she could not control.

"Carriage is close at hand," said Emsworth, as the train stopped. "I'll get a couple of porters to carry you, Braetoun."

"Don't," he said; "that news has roused me. If you and the Doctor each give me an arm, I dare say I can walk."

"But——" began Emsworth.

"Let him try," said Murray, who had stepped out after Emsworth, and stood with him at the carriage door.

Olive held out her hand to her husband, but he did not take it.

"Get out first," he said; "their help will be better;" and he leant forward a little, with his hands resting on the padded arms of the carriage.

There was nothing for Olive to do but obey; and as her back was turned, she screened effectually from the Doctor's jealously watching eyes, as he handed her out, that which took place within. For in an instant Braetoun's hand had grasped and warmly pressed Lucy's little trembling fingers, holding them tightly as the pressure was spasmodically returned.

The next moment the convalescent was raising himself to his feet, and then grasped the Doctor's and Emsworth's hands as they helped him out, and then supported him

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across the platform to the carriage where Nurse Jennett stood waiting with her bag.

"Oh, Baby—Baby!" whispered Aunt Duncan, "what have you done?"

"Don't—don't speak to me, Auntie, pray—pray, or I shall make a scene," she panted. "You don't know—you don't know what you've done. I was so wretched I thought I should die, while now—oh, Auntie—Auntie, once more—once more! He's mine—he's mine!"

"Yes," said Aunt Duncan bitterly, "Bella Donna has won."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Home, Sweet Home.

Chester Square was entered by Emsworth's high-stepping horses before the cab had deposited Aunt Duncan and her niece in Great Russell Street, and Braetoun bore the moving easily. Murray accompanied his patient, and saw that all went well.

"Back home, dearest," said Olive, as soon as her husband was resting back in an easy chair.

"Yes, back home," he said. "You'll stop to dinner, Mr. Emsworth?"

"No, thank you; I only wanted to see you safe.—He ought to go to bed soon, oughtn't he, Doctor?"

"There is no hurry," said Murray quietly. "He will act according to how he feels. We ought to congratulate him upon bearing the journey so well."

"And on my turf success," said Braetoun laughingly. "Oh, I could bear it. I'd have borne anything to get away from the sad sea waves."

"Humph!" ejaculated Emsworth, and then to himself: "A planned business, curse him! but they bungled it a bit. What's to be the next move, I wonder?—There, I'm off now. Will you come down to the door with me, my dear?"

"Yes, father," said Olive, "but——"

"Oh, go down and see the old man off," said Braetoun banteringly; "he wants to give you a bit of advice, I dare say."

Olive gave him a reproachful look, and followed her father down.

"Ah!" said Murray, "I wanted to be alone with you for a few minutes before I went, Braetoun."

"Eh? Want to put something on my mare for the next race?"

"No, but I want to see you run the rest of your earthly race like a man—like the lad promised who was my old form companion."

"Look here, I'm not in a humour to listen to preaching," said Braetoun sourly.

"Very well, then, I will appeal to you through your body if I cannot through your brain."

"There, there; that will do," cried Braetoun peevishly. "I'm tired out, and there's nothing the matter now. I only want some food and a good sleep."

"Yes, and you will have both soon."

"All right; now leave me alone. I know what you're thinking."

"I suppose so. But look here, Braetoun, it is my duty to tell you once for all that any undue excitement may prove serious. You must now lead a quiet, domestic life. You know well enough what you must do."

"I know what you have told me," said Braetoun contemptuously.

"Yes," said Murray sternly, "and you know it is the honest truth. Now be advised. I do not wish to boast, but I have saved your life, one which I pray Heaven may now, for your wife's sake, become happy and peaceful."

"All right, pray away, but don't pray before me, nor preach either, and please leave my wife out of it. She has nothing to do with your medicine. I dare say I can take care of myself, but if I fall ill, you can come and doctor me, and set me right again."

"If I can," said Murray meaningly.

"Oh, you can; and you'd better look in from time to time, and see how I am. You'll like that."

The last words were uttered so meaningly that Murray stood looking at him sternly.

"Yes," he said at last, "I should like to do all I could for the man I have striven for again and again. But you must be careful, Braetoun, for your wife's sake."

There was a quick gesture, and an ugly sneer in the tones of Braetoun's voice as he said:

"Oh, all right, I'll take care; but that accident did me good, and I'm going to be stronger than ever. Antagonism of disease, don't you fellows call it? One has killed the other. There, come in often."

Murray took his leave calmly enough directly after, when Olive re-entered the room, for the sad, limpid, and weary look in the young wife's eyes seemed to chase away all that was base in his nature. There was a manly, chivalrous pressure in his hand, a look of reverence in his eyes, and a feeling of tender pity in his breast.

"Good-bye," he said cheerfully. "Don't be alarmed, Lady Braetoun; he has borne the journey well."

"You think so?" she said piteously.

"Think? I am sure. He will soon be himself again." And what a struggle it was to say those words!

"But you will come in and see him again soon?"

"Oh, yes," said Braetoun, "he shall come in and see me again soon. I say, Murray, what a bill you will have!"

"Yes, a heavier one than you can grasp," said Murray cheerfully, "and I'll drop in and see you to-morrow some time."

He took his leave while Braetoun sat watching his wife, ready to attack her first and disarm her, should she utter a reproach, and he did attack, though there was no need, for she would not have spoken.

"Oh, yes, he shall come and watch over me; don't be afraid. Capital company, the Doctor."

Then to himself:

"I'm not blind. Enough to make any man go wrong. Illness is bad enough. But never mind; Bella Donna has won. Well done, old Vinniss! What a comfort it is to feel independent once again!"

He was sitting back in an easy chair, and Olive stood by the window as if looking out, but really seeing the scene in the railway carriage once more. She was longing to speak, but could not trust herself for fear she should break down. The tension of that afternoon had been more than she could bear.

She had been hoping it had all been a sudden surprise, an accident, she believed; but all the same a terrible fear had come upon her of what the future was to be. As to Braetoun's strange words, they made no impression. He was irritable and weary, and she had often listened to petty, childish remarks from him during his illness, words which had sent her from the room in tears; but of late they had not made any impression to signify, and she had on this occasion hardly heeded them, for her brain was filled with the events of that day.

And now, like a sudden flash of light, came a thought which swept away the idea of the meeting being accidental. Had it been planned?

She shuddered, and dismissed the idea at once. She was wrong, she told herself, and she was frightening herself with fancies that had no basis. The past was dead, and he had at times been loving, gentle, and reconnaissant to her. All she had to do was to show him that, spite of all, her love was unchanged.

Feeling relieved now, she turned to where he was seated, reproaching herself for her silence, and, laying her hand upon his shoulder, she bent down, and found that he was sleeping heavily.

"Poor fellow! What he has suffered!" she said, with the tears rising to her eyes, and brimming over; "but he is better, and we are going to be happy once more. Tired

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out, Frederick?" she whispered; and she pressed her lips to his forehead.

The next moment her heart began to beat fast, and a sigh of content escaped her lips, for he passed his arms about her, and muttered softly:

"Ah, Baby! You once more!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Nurse Jennett Plays Her Game.

Murray kept his word, and came next day to see how the journey had been borne, renewing the previous conversation.

"Well, I really am what they call repentant now, old man. This last illness is a sickener—no joke meant. I'm going to settle down now to being quite the country gentleman."

"For how long? Till the next fit comes on?"

"No; I am going to have no more fits. I'm going to be as steady as a judge. That's not saying much, though."

"Well, I've warned you till I'm tired of speaking. You know as well as I do that your constitution will not stand the strain. You must give up all excitement—especially racing."

"Oh, hang it, no! Well, there, if I must, I must. But I shall keep on the little mare—I can't sell her—and just enter her for some little plate now and then."

Murray looked at him with a bitter contempt in his eyes.

"I have warned you once more, and I have done with you. If you like to be careful you may live for years in peace and happiness. If you persist in being the fast man about town you will die."

"But I shall have seen life," said Braetoun, with a peculiar, mocking look.

"And have the misery of the knowledge that you have broken a true woman's heart."

"Don't preach, man; and suppose we leave morals out of the question. I dare say I understand my wife now, and she understands me."

Murray shrugged his shoulders.

"There, I don't want to boast," he said, "but I have saved your life again."

"Splendidly."

"But this is the last time I will attend you. Your troubles are wilfully brought on, and so you must suffer for them."

"Bah! If I'm unlucky enough to be taken bad again you'll come, as you always have."

"You are mistaken, Braetoun, I shall not."

"Oh, yes, you will. The wife will come and beg of you, and you can't refuse her anything."

Murray looked at him searchingly, and there was a mocking look in his patient's eyes which startled him; but the idea which flashed into his brain passed away directly, for, in spite of his words, Braetoun's manner contradicted the possibility of his meaning anything serious.

"You really have pulled me round again wonderfully, old fellow," continued Braetoun lightly, "and I'm precious glad to get back home. I say, it was precious rough on poor Olive for her to have to come and nurse me there, but she has been a perfect angel over it all. Never once referred to it, and no wife could have behaved better."

"No wife could have behaved better," said Murray, repeating his words. "Try and recollect that."

"Of course, I will. Don't I tell you I'm going to be a model husband now? I was sick of lying shut up in that miserable little hole. It was so awkward, too, for Olive."

"Very," said Murray, looking at him intently.

"What are you thinking about?"

"I was only wondering what kind of brain yours must be to take all these things so lightly."

"Yes; that's what I often wonder, myself. 'Tis my nature to, as old Dr. Watts would have said. I say, old fellow, we can't all be such good men as you, eh?"

There was a sneer again in this, but Murray did not wince. He passed it over, and rose to go.

"Off?"

"Yes, I am going."

"Won't you stop and see the wife first? She has gone on to see the mater and tell her I'm comfortably settled down, and she may come and see me as often as she likes without the doctor ordering her off."

"No; I told Lady Braetoun yesterday I should not call again, and bade her good-bye."

"Nonsense! You'll come again soon, I know," said Braetoun, half mockingly. "But, I say, how long am I to keep that old cat here? Surely I don't want a nurse, now?"

"I advise you to keep her here for nearly another month. She will be very useful, and you are not so strong as you think."

"Oh, I say, don't begin croaking again."

"Your strength is only on the surface, as you would soon find if you exerted yourself in the slightest degree."

There was a tap at the door just then, and Braetoun cried, "Come in," the nurse herself entering directly.

"What do you want?" said Braetoun roughly.

"Only to ask Doctor Murray if he has any orders to give me, my lord."

"What, about boiled soles, and chicken broth, rice pudding, and that sort of thing?"

The nurse shrugged her shoulders and wrinkled her forehead.

"Hang it all! Don't do that," cried Braetoun, with a sudden burst of petulancy. "You're not a Frenchwoman."

"No," said Murray quietly, "I have no further instructions to give you. You know the dieting that should be followed better than I can tell you. I leave Lord Braetoun in your hands now, and I strongly advise that you stay with him for at least a month."

"His lordship will, I hope, bear that in mind," said the nurse quietly, "if I seem too exacting, knowing as he will that I have Doctor Murray's authority for all I do."

"Oh, yes, I shall bear it all in mind, and be as patient as a lamb, so long as I feel certain that it's all right."

"It will be quite right," said Murray gravely. "I fully trust Nurse Jennett's judgment in such a case as yours. There, I am glad you are so far recovered, so now good-day. Thank you, nurse, for your kind attention and the carefully exact way in which you have seconded my efforts. I hope to have you often to help me in the future. Good-bye for the present. Send me a line when you are free again."

"Yes, sir, certainly I will," she said quietly; but there was a strange lurid look in her eyes as she fixed them upon him sharply, and she shivered slightly as he left the room.

"What the dickens does he mean by that?" said Braetoun, angrily. "He surely has not gone. Here, nurse, go to the window and look out. He can't go away like this. No; go to the door and call him back."

But at that moment the front door was heard to close.

"Here, quick, the window. Why, that's the wheels of his brougham."

The nurse ran to the window and looked out.

"No, my lord," she said, "it is another carriage drawing up, with a lady inside."

"My mother?"

"No, my lord," said the woman, looking at him with a peculiarly malicious gleam in her half-closed eyes; "her ladyship has returned, and Doctor Murray has gone to the carriage door, raised his hat, and taken her hand."

Braetoun started as if a sharp weapon had been thrust into his breast, and he turned upon the woman fiercely.

(To be continued.)

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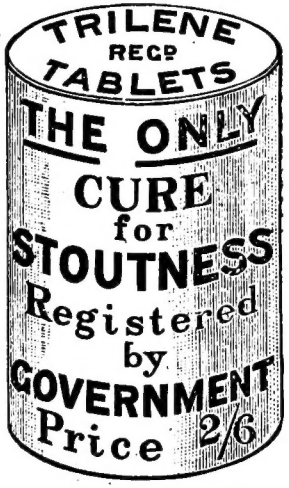

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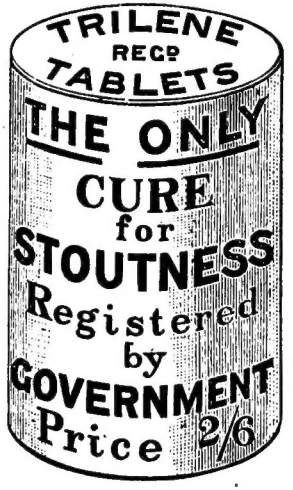

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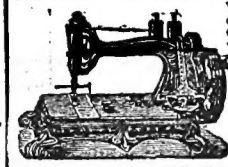

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